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THOMAS MANN'S POLITICAL AND SOCIAL THOUGHT 1914-1918

A STUDY OF THE BETRACHTUNGEN EINES UNPOLITISCHEN

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled THOMAS MANN'S POLITICAL AND SOCIAL THOUGHT 1914-1918: A STUDY OF THE BETRACHTUNGEN EINES UNPOLITISCHEN submitted by Frederick F. Burghardt in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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ABSTRACT

The foundation of all Thomas Mann's political ideas was laid in the period from 1914 to 1918 when he wrote his first political work, the Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen. This thesis is a detailed study of the Betrachtungen with the purpose of understanding the political and social thought of Thomas Mann.

Mann evidenced a romantic patriotism during the First World War. In fact the whole tenor of Mann's thought can be described as nineteenth century romantic, especially in his visualization of his German homeland as the guardian of Kultur and all that was worthwhile in the European tradition.

Mann's political and social thought was both anti-modern and anti-democratic. It was particularly on this latter point that he clashed with his brother Heinrich Mann. Thomas Mann himself was a follower of Schopenhauer's rather pessimistic and authoritarian political views. Mann longed for the integrated life which he idealistically ascribed to Germany's dimly remembered past.

Mann also admired Paul de Lagarde and shared his reverence for Germany's traditions and the idea of the German Volk. But unlike Lagarde and many of his own contemporaries, Mann was aware that these longings for the idealized past were only futile dreams.

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INTRODUCTION

Thomas Mann was born in the Hanseatic city of Lübeck in 1875, and he grew up in the heyday of the Bismarkian era. The period during which he lived was one of great political and social change in Germany. In the pre-war Wilhelmine Reich he was aware of the changes taking place and reflected them in his novels, but he himself had scarcely any part in the changes which were affecting Germany. It was the outbreak of the First World War that brought Mann to the political awareness revealed in his Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen. This work, written during the war-time period 1915 to 1918 was the first of Mann's major political tracts. After the war, at least until 1922, his political position was not well defined; after his 1922 speech "Von Deutscher Republik" he became a staunch defender of German democracy. During the entire period of his writing Mann's works reflected and commented on the social, political and intellectual aspects of the changing times in which he lived. During the time of the Hitler era, Mann found he could not accept the New Order and went into exile. He never moved back although he outlived the Third Reich.¹

Mann had the keen perception of an artist and his novels attest to his awareness of his milieu. Buddenbrooks, his first major work, which appeared in 1901 portrayed the decline of a Hanseatic merchant family faced with the challenge of a more turbulent world of modern industry and business, but unable to face the challenge of change because the family is too much part of the cultural accumulation of past centuries.² The Magic Mountain which appeared after World War I intuitively caught the mood of the generation of Germans which had

fought the war and remembered the intellectual and spiritual conflicts that had preceded it and reappeared soon after the conflict. Hans Castorp, the novel's hero, was caught between the humanitarian democratic and progressive ideology of the West, and the mystical, communal and tradition oriented culture of the East.³ The Joseph Stories revealed the eternal values of man in a Biblical setting at a time when Hitler denied these values and the heritage of Western man.⁴ Dr. Faustus too, by portraying the genius Adrian Leverkühn had its timely message. As the Third Reich lay in ruins Mann wrote his own Dr. Faustus which in its mystical descent into the character of Faustus described the spiritual decline of Germany.

Not merely his novels, but also his numerous speeches and articles attest to the commitment of Thomas Mann to be part of his age and to help, as best he could, to mold it.⁵ In 1922, after the founding of the Weimar Republic, he came forward like very few German intellectuals and gave it his full support despite the unpopularity from which the Republic suffered.⁶ Through lecture tours in 1926 and particularly through the discussions known as Pariser Rechenschaft⁷ Mann attempted to reconcile Germany and France, the nations which less than a decade before had fought each other so relentlessly. With the rising popularity of National Socialism, Mann took upon himself the defence of the democratic Weimar Republic, and also pointed out the dangers lurking in the ideology of National Socialism. For his efforts, his books were banned and exile, first⁸ in Switzerland and later in the United States, became necessary.

His major political work the Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen expressed anti-democratic feeling, but once this is said,

little else remains sure. It is the hope of the author that a systematic analysis of the Betrachtungen yield a further understanding of the social and political thought of Thomas Mann. It is not so much the concern of this thesis to explain what made Mann change from an opponent of democracy to a defender of it. The concern here is primarily to understand the Betrachtungen rather than continue the long standing polemic on the subject.

No one has underestimated the importance of the Betrachtungen for an understanding of Thomas Mann's political ideas, as his first major political expression it has received the attention due it. However, few scholars have agreed on just what Thomas Mann's political and social ideas are.

This thesis will consider first of all the reasons why the book was written and the frame of mind of Thomas Mann at the time. Also in the first chapter is to be found a resume of scholarly opinions on the Betrachtungen and an attempt to assess their relative merits. The succeeding three chapters deal with the ideas contained in the Betrachtungen: the second chapter deals with Mann's attitude toward the German Nation, the third with his role as keen observer and critic of the times in which he lived, and the fourth with his social and political theories. In each case both the origins and the implications of his ideas will be sought.

FOOTNOTES

1

Eberhard Hilscher, Thomas Mann: Leben und Werk (Berlin: Volkseigener Verlag, 1966), pp. 203-204. See also: Hans Burgin, Hans-Otto Mayer, Thomas Mann: Eine Chronik seines Lebens (Frankfurt/M: S. Fischer Verlag, 1965), passim.

2

Hans Eichner, Four German Writers, CBC University of the Air (Toronto: CBC Publications, 1964), p.3.

3

Arnold Bauer, Thomas Mann, Kopfe des XX Jahrhunderts (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1960), p. 37-41.

4

There are four Joseph Stories: Joseph and his Brothers (1934), The Young Joseph (1935), Joseph in Egypt (1936), and Joseph the Provider (1944).

5

Walter A. Berendsohn, Thomas Mann: Künstler und Kamper in Bewegter Zeit (Lübeck: Verlag Max Schmidt-Romhild, 1965), p.137

6

Thomas Mann, Bemühungen: Neue Folge de Gesammelten Abhandlungen und kleinen Aufsätze (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1925), pp. 189-190.

7

Thomas Mann, Pariser Rechtschaft (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1926), passim.

8

Hilscher, pp. 70-75.

CHAPTER I

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THOMAS MANN'S BETRACHTUNGEN

Only three days after the outbreak of the First World War, Thomas Mann wrote to his brother Heinrich:

I still feel as if I were in a dream - but one must nevertheless feel ashamed for not having considered it [the war] possible and for not having seen that the catastrophe had to come. What a calamity! How₁ will Europe look spiritually and physically when it is over.

For the troops in the fields of France and Belgium the dream was soon dispelled by harsh realities. Thomas Mann himself began to consider the causes of the catastrophe, and why it had been seemingly inevitable. His reflections appeared in an essay entitled "Gedanken im Kriege" published in Die neue Rundschau in November of 1914² in which Mann argued that the war being fought was a conflict between German Kultur and Western Civilization, and that the conflict was a necessary one because the West had not allowed Germany to develop according to Germany's true spirit. The first was entitled "Friedrich und die Grosse Koalition".³ In it, Mann argued that Germany's invasion of Belgium was akin to Frederick the Great's violation of Saxon neutrality in the Seven Years War. The second essay was in the form of a letter to the Svenska Dagbladet of Stockholm.⁴ This essay, also known as "Gedanken zum Kriege", was an attempt to restate and develop themes already present in the previous essays for the enlightenment of neutrals concerning the German position in the war.

Though his initial reaction had been to view the war in terms of human suffering and death, the three essays all praise the war either as a necessary conflict which served to release the emotions and tensions Europe could no longer sustain, or as one which would rejuvenate a tired Europe. A victorious Germany would have the freedom to achieve new heights of cultural development.

The three essays were for the most part propagandistic. Referring to his first war-time essay, "Gedanken im Kriege", in a letter to his friend Philipp Witkop,⁵ Mann admitted that his essay "which I hope you didn't see in the Rundschau", was "pure journalism".⁶ Journalistic too, were his other two essays. The "Friedrich" essay represented an artful attempt to rationalize Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality; the third essay "Gedanken zum Kriege", was a sullen reaction against the attacks and insults Germany had to suffer in the world press.

Mann was particularly upset by the French writer Romain Rolland's personal attacks. In a footnote to the essay "Pro Aris" which was initially published in the Cahiers Vaudois⁷ but reprinted in the collected volume Au dessus de la Melee,⁸ Rolland attacked Mann for upholding a primitive and barbarous definition of Kultur. The footnote is of great interest and deserves to be quoted.

When I wrote this, I had not yet seen the monstrous article by Thomas Mann (in the Neue Rundschau of November 1914), where, in a fit of fury and injured pride, he savagely claimed for Germany, as a title to glory, all the crimes of which her adversaries accuse her. He dared to write that the present war was one of German Kultur 'against Civilization',

As the Betrachtungen's counter-attack against Rolland clearly shows, Mann was very upset by the criticism his three essays

had brought him. At the same time, however, he must have realized that the criticisms were at least partially justifiable. Firstly, the essays were not suited to a defense of Germany because of their brevity. They did not explain the German position in enough detail. Secondly, their subject matter too was relevant only to the war and the particular topics it raised. For these reasons, the essays can at best be considered as auxiliaries to any study of Thomas Mann's political and social thought in this period.

Above all, it is his famous Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen¹⁰ which provides the most comprehensive information concerning his socio-political thinking in this era. This volume is a particularly apt source because it is voluminous enough to enable the discernment of definite trends and thesis in Mann's political thoughts and attitudes. Although it is a war-time book and product of the war, it does show at least a certain degree of detachment from the concerns of the moment and to a certain degree attempts to achieve a universality of outlook. Its subject matter is not tied to the immediate events of the war, as is that of the three essays published at the outbreak of hostilities. The Betrachtungen also include some of the germinal ideas of the earlier essays of Mann, and most of the crucial points made in the three essays reappear again in the Betrachtungen, although intellectually enriched and deprived of their journalistic sensationalism. Thus any study of Mann's social and political thoughts in the period 1914-1918 must, and can safely be based on the Betrachtungen. Even so recent a commentator as Kurt Sontheimer viewed the Betrachtungen as the foundation of all of Mann's political writings.¹¹

However, very little in-depth research has been done on Mann's political ideas, and the treatment of the Betrachtungen has in most cases been superficial. Kurt Sontheimer, in his book Thomas Mann und die Deutschen, gives perhaps the best analysis of the Betrachtungen. Sontheimer's treatment is objective, it includes the main themes presented in the Betrachtungen, but suffers from brevity and also from an attempt to over-categorize Mann's subject matter.¹² Ernst Keller's, Der Unpolitische Deutsche, though dedicated exclusively to the study of the Betrachtungen unlike Sontheimer's work, is too descriptive and lacks analysis.¹³ Perhaps the least satisfactory of studies on Thomas Mann's political ideas is Martin Flinker's work Thomas Manns Politische Betrachtungen.¹⁴ Flinker takes it upon himself to defend Mann against the accusation of Germanophilism and in the process of so doing distorts the essential meaning of the Betrachtungen.

It is easy to see why the book has created misinterpretations, for the Betrachtungen is by nature neither systematic nor precise. Even the title itself reflects the multiplicity and ambiguity of the book's message. The word Betrachtungen can mean reflections in an introspective personal sense, or it can refer to ways of looking at things in a structural sense, and the term could even mean philosophical reflections. The work in fact reflects all three of these meanings.¹⁵ Unpolitischer, the adjective Mann used to describe himself, is equally confusing. A conscious claim to be unpolitical itself has political implications. Mann does in fact take a political posture in the Betrachtungen by rejecting democracy which for him is equivalent to "dirty politics".¹⁶

The Betrachtungen manifests the ambiguity of its title throughout its six-hundred and more pages. The author himself thought his creation "the strangest of all literary products of the war". At one point he termed his work a "malheur",¹⁸ a hapless document of a sad time; at other times he referred to it as scribbling unfit for publication. Mann obviously had misgivings about his book. In the Betrachtungen itself he refers to it as:

the product of a particular problematic, the presentation of an inner-personal dualistic split and conflict. This makes it neither a book nor a work of art, but almost something else, it almost becomes a poetic composition.¹⁹

It is only by a careful analysis of Mann's introduction to the Betrachtungen that the meaning of the above statement becomes clear. Unfortunately such analysis has not been forthcoming. Georg Lukacs was probably right when he said that the problem with Thomas Mann studies is that most critics have looked to the man, and have not studied his books closely enough.²⁰ The result has been that the Betrachtungen in particular has been interpreted in a most unfortunate way. The German Nationalists and conservatives of the Weimar period saw the work as a powerful weapon in their favor, yet scorned to use it because of Mann's conversion to democracy in 1922.²¹ The democrats saw it as a literary fossil of the imperialist age. Not until after World War II was any effort made to study the Betrachtungen carefully, and even then all the studies that were undertaken reflect the prejudices of the critics, and not the content of the Betrachtungen. Perhaps the most blatantly subjectivist interpretation of Mann's work is Martin Flinker's which manages to see the message of the Betrachtungen as being identical

with Gaullism.²² In The Mind of Germany, Hans Kohn saw Thomas Mann as a precursor of National Socialism.²³ These scholars all missed the essence of the Betrachtungen because they did not ask the questions which Thomas Mann anticipated and answered. In a letter to his friend Kurt Martens, Mann admonished him to read his book the right way:

I must hope that the book will be read in the right frame of mind and spirit, that means it should not be read as a 'book', which would somehow wish to lead and convince the reader of a particular opinion; but it should be read more as a novel, as the presentation of a consciously experienced and therefore already present²⁴ inner-personal notion of an intellectual destiny.

In his introduction he attempted to create the spirit in which he wanted his work to be read, by giving the reader insight into the frame of mind from which the work developed. This frame of mind can be reconstructed by asking two questions. How did Thomas Mann view the Betrachtungen? Why did he write the work?

Mann repeated over and over that the Betrachtungen was not a book which intended to convert the reader to a particular viewpoint. Mann refers to the work as both "labor" and "outpouring".²⁵ Why does he refer to it as a labor? Primarily because Mann felt it was not wholly the product of a novelist's intuition. Mann constantly cited authorities and sources to substantiate various points.²⁶ This step he saw as necessary because he felt himself inept at expressing many points which some authority could substantiate more firmly and convincingly. At times Mann maintains he felt himself being overcome by the subject matter of his book; he felt inadequate to cope with the problems his subject presented and thus he went to the authorities.²⁷

In this connection it must be kept in mind that Mann did not think of himself as an intellectual; he only claimed to be an artist.

Is the artist an intellectual being at all? Perhaps he cannot be, because he is to a high degree a person who simultaneously shapes and wills. I doubt that the stock of human thought has ever been enriched by artists. In fact Nietzsche contends that artists have always been merely lackeys of some morality or other and firmly refuses to take them seriously as intellectuals.²⁸

Mann came to the conclusion that he could not take himself seriously as a scholar or intellectual. And he commented that his use of authorities was by way of dialogue, not a case of scholarly citations. Mann correctly decided that his work was the work of an artist, and thus he implored that the book be read like a novel, not like a scholarly thesis.²⁹

Yet he still maintained that the book was not totally a novel or work of art precisely because of the scholastic elements it contained. Mann knew that he had not really defined the nature of the work, nor had he explained its essence in any precise way. He realized the paradoxical character of the Betrachtungen and hoped that his work would be received as a sincere effort on the part of the author to come to grips with "the most difficult years"³⁰ of his life.

They were difficult years, because Mann felt he had come to an intellectual crisis in his life. They were difficult:

thanks to the intellectual circumstances of the period; the fluctuation of everything constant, the shaking of all cultural foundations; because of an artistically heinous confusion of thoughts, the naked impossibility to accomplish anything on the basis of a constant being.³¹

The values Mann had taken for granted seemed to have deserted him. He could thus neither continue his career as a novelist, nor could he come to grips with the intellectual problems the war had raised.

His artistic conscience plagued him. The war affected Mann not only as an event of the greatest world importance, but also as a striking and very personal crisis. The war, as Georges Fourrier has pointed out, brought to the fore a long standing dispute with his brother Heinrich Mann.³²

Heinrich saw the war as the great opportunity for democracy to overcome the Wilhelmine Reich, and he was not altogether adverse to a revolution in Germany which would lead to the establishment of a republic based on the principles of the French revolution. In his "Zola" essay,³³ published in 1915, he made a veiled comparison between the Wilhelmine Reich and the Second Empire of France maintaining that like the rule of Napoleon III, the Reign of Wilhelm II would end in military disaster and lead to the establishment of a republic. Throughout the "Zola" essay Heinrich argued that progress is inevitable; that truth and reality demanded that Germany, a reactionary power like the Empire of Napoleon III, become a republic. In the same essay he also condemned the "patriotically inspired incompetents", who preached the "nationalistic catechism" which he considered to be "stupid and criminal". He condemned those who did not see that:

the destiny of your people is not served through a multitude of patriotic adventures, rather it is served through domestic development, domestic progress; what then would remain for you, but to work along, to progress by serving. But you are not here to serve, you are here only to be sparkling and conspicuous.³⁴

Heinrich maintained that those who mouthed the platitudes of patriotism had chosen the moment over the future, and that those who indulged in patriotic jingoism were merely entertaining "Schmarotzer" even if they were accomplished artists.³⁵

Thomas Mann felt offended to the highest degree. He had supported the national cause; he did not wish to see democracy conquering Germany; his early war essays opposed democracy. Was his brother attacking him? There can be no doubt Thomas felt that he was, and later in a letter of reconciliation in 1918, Heinrich admitted that he had. The "Zola" essay had been aimed at all nationalists, including Thomas Mann. The nationalist position was, in Heinrich's view, the platform of those who were lost and hopelessly confused.³⁶

Thomas Mann seems to have been persuaded by his brother's essay, and in a 1918 letter to Heinrich, he pointed out that the two years of work he had poured into the Betrachtungen were aimed at freeing himself from the accusations of his brother:

What lies behind me was the work of a galley slave; nevertheless I am grateful for the awareness that today I am not as helpless to stand against your fanatical diatribes, as at the time when you were able to embarrass me with them to the quick.³⁷

Repeating the word which Heinrich had used to describe the nationalistic and patriotic intellectuals, Thomas hotly denied that he was a "Schmarotzer" and argued that his book was not only an exercise in prose but a revelation of his innermost thoughts and being. His writings, Thomas argued, were not only vague quotations supporting a nebulous ideal of democracy like Heinrich's, but rather a portrayal of a soul.³⁸

It is with good cause that literary analysts of the Betrachtungen have viewed the conflict between the brothers as one of the main creative forces resulting in the Betrachtungen.³⁹

But as Ernst Bertram, a long-time friend of Thomas Mann's has pointed out, "historical justice" demands:

the somewhat pedantic marginal comment that this personal conflict, central as it is to the book, was by no means its starting point. The work was begun, and large parts of it were already in existence in first draft, when Heinrich Mann's major Zola essay in the Weissen Blätter came to Thomas Mann's attention in 1915.⁴⁰

What else then motivated the Betrachtungen? Mann asked himself this question in the introduction of his work. He asked, could it be the juxtaposition of a world-changing event, and the arrival of middle age, which demanded a re-thinking of his entire Weltanschauung?⁴¹ With some reluctance Mann rejected this interpretation. The forces which created the Betrachtungen were prior in time to the war and to the conflict with his brother. The origins of his book lay in a problem of conscience; the Betrachtungen represented an attempt to come to grips with his own world outlook; to investigate and explore his attitude toward the world around him; to see politics in light of his own attitude; to assure himself that his brother was not right; to see if a position of patriotism was yet possible. To see if truth and virtue were really on the side of the French; to determine if Germany and its intellectual spirit were really the swan song of an epoch that was dying. The brother conflict was central only in as much as it made Thomas Mann realize and personally become aware of the political issues of the day. Just as the war had mobilized millions of men and set them marching, it set in motion Mann's thoughts and forced him to realize:

that there was no longer any recognizable difference between that which concerned the individual and that which did not; everything was in a state of confusion and agitation. Problems smashed into one another and could not longer be separated, the dependence, the unity of all intellectual problems, the problem of man itself presented itself, and the sense of responsibility created by this realization demanded the taking of a political position and resolution.⁴²

The war had synthesized and brought to the fore the problem of the individual's relation to the world around him. But why did it affect Mann so seriously; why did he have to spend two years writing a book that he said could well contain "pedantry and childishness"?⁴³ Indeed, the war had raised issues, but Mann wrote because he felt a profound loneliness - the loneliness of the artist. The loneliness of the artist which forced him to express himself; the loneliness of one who sees and feels the world around him and yet cannot find solace either in friend or relation. And thus Mann felt he must appeal to the world at large, not only to tell it of his thoughts, but also to purge himself of the anguish created by them. This loneliness has extremely intimate roots in the conflict of brother against brother; yet the conflict, as Thomas Mann himself pointed out, has more of an intellectual significance than a personal one, and thus he felt that the book deserved to be published.

For this intimate conflict plays a role in the intellectual realm, and without question displays enough symbolic worth to justify its publication, and viewed in this way should not be considered insulting.⁴⁴

In his attempt to explain the genesis of the Betrachtungen, Mann also maintained that he was impelled by "service to his age", a need to come to grips with issues of the times. Many liberals saw the current of time ever striving toward the development of greater freedom and democracy.⁴⁵ They tied themselves to a dream which they felt would inevitably be fulfilled; coping with the issues of the times, according to Mann, was more than faith in the dream of democracy. To cope with the issues of the times meant for him dealing with the problems created in his own consciousness by the events of his time. Thus the Betrachtungen became "an expression";

of problems, of the here and there, the yes and no, the two souls in one breast, the terrible richness of inner conflicts, contradictions and debates.⁴⁶

More specifically, Mann's problems centered around the attitude he should take toward the war. How could he grasp the significance, the meaning, and the issues of the war. This was the duty the times had placed upon him. It was no longer the same duty which had forced him to write the three essays in defense of Germany's war effort - it was no longer a heated diatribe against those who slandered and lied about Germany; Mann felt he must attempt to see the real issues at stake in the war. Unlike numerous academics who sought to find the significance of the war, Mann hardly dealt with the issues the conflict raised in the economic and power-political sphere.⁴⁷ His concern was in the intellectual realm. Unlike his attitude in the three wartime essays, Mann's position in the Betrachtungen was not, "Here I stand, right or wrong." Rather he attempted to see his own political position, and attempted to lay bare its intellectual roots. Granted, he still clung to his loyalty to the nation, but this was itself the issue for Mann:

The need of the nation is also my personal need -- that may well be the only reason I have so linked myself to it, to the ire and scorn of the anti-nationalists.⁴⁸

It is because he closely identified himself with the nation that Mann supported Germany. According to Mann, both affirm Kultur and reject civilization, a word the Germans saw as synonymous with materialism.⁴⁹ Mann also viewed it as a new faith, a new form of mysticism; one contrary to the German faith, Kultur which was also a seeking after truth, and hence an expression of the problems of life itself. Unlike civilization, which creates a philosophical system from ideals unrelated to what Mann considered to be the lessons of life, Kultur is the reflection

of life itself. It is the philosophy created by life itself. In his definition of Kultur Mann reflected the Lebensphilosophie ideas prevalent in his age.^{49a} Kultur, like Lebensphilosophie, is pessimistic not because it considered doom inevitable, but because it recognized a reality which does not point toward a sunny heaven or bright future, but rather toward a continuing and perhaps even more problematic future.⁵⁰

It is in the spirit that Germany and Thomas Mann were united. He quite explicitly maintained that he was interested only in the intellectual atmosphere of his nation, not in its power-political or industrial ambitions.

I am neither a militaristic junker, nor an industrial magnate, nor am I even a connected with capital as a social-imperialist. I have no life or death interest in German commercial superiority, and even have doubts as to Germany's calling as an imperial nation and as a World political power.⁵¹

Unlike more mundane minded Germans of the period, Mann said that he viewed the war not as a test of physical strength between Germany and her English competitor, but as a matter of the honor of the German spirit.⁵² This point must be constantly kept in mind when dealing with the Betrachtungen for it is not an exposition of a jingoist, but of a person concerned with maintaining a national ethos which he considered to be worthy of its existence, and without which the world would be poorer. The defense of Germany was imperative for Mann, for if the German Reich which defended the German spirit were to collapse, the German Weltanschauung would be crushed and eventually suffer complete extinction.

Despite the unity of the national and personal in Mann's Betrachtungen the work remains a highly individualistic one. It is a work which expressed the outlook of a particular individual, and a work expressing a highly personal commitment to the German nation.

The book can almost be considered as a confession, revealing Mann's outlook on the world at a particular time.⁵³ Mann revealed both his own outlook, and the opposing one he attributed to the West.

Britain, France, and their allies were seen as the exponents of a world outlook based on the optimism of the eighteenth century philosophers. The whole philosophy of the West, Mann argued, was based on the century in which the revolution began. He said of this century:

The eighteenth century sought to forget what is known concerning the true nature of Man, in order to fit him into its utopia. Superficial, soft, humanitarian, raving for "Man's" cause, it pushed for reforms of a social and political nature by using art as propaganda.⁵⁴

Mann considered the nations of the West as the heirs of the utopian and rationalist tradition of the eighteenth century. The nineteenth century, the German century according to Mann, revolted against the "domination of ideals".⁵⁵ It revolted against the abstract ideals of the eighteenth century. Reflecting a peculiar mingling of romanticism and realism, Mann argued that the nineteenth century was more realistic and more intellectually probing because it had overthrown the restrictions imposed by ideals. He said of the nineteenth century:

More animalistic, and uglier, yes more plebeian and because of that "better", "more honest" than any other century, was the nineteenth century. It was more submissive to reality and more honest.⁵⁶

The eighteenth century had viewed the world as a logical, and by nature a rational entity. Thus it was not only to be understood by human reason, but reason could also guide man toward the perfection of himself and his environment. Mann disagreed with this enlightenment outlook and he argued that the eighteenth century philosophes distorted the picture of what man actually was. In this argument, Mann took a page from the Sturm und Drang movement.⁵⁷ Mann, like the critics of the en-

lightenment of the late eighteenth century, felt that the philosophes had constructed utopias in which they argued man could be a peaceful and contented being, true to his place in a rational natural order. They rejected the world surrounding them and instead preached the utopian goals of their speculative systems. In doing so, the great minds of the enlightenment confused the reality of the here and now with the utopia they prayed would come. The philosophes argued that men were indeed essentially perfectable, rational, and good; only an unjust political system, a repressive and inequitable social order, and a priest-ridden society had held man in bondage and had prevented him from actually behaving rationally and in a good way. Thus, they argued, let the priests, and other archaic institutions be swept away and freedom would reign.

By stressing the utopian aspect of eighteenth century enlightenment thought, Mann was able to invoke the criticism that the eighteenth century had chosen to forget "what is actually known concerning the nature of man".⁵⁸ Mann's criticism, like Schopenhauer's, and like Schlosser's criticism of Kant,⁵⁹ was basically that the enlightenment refused to recognize that the imperfection of the world, the wickedness of it, was part of man's very nature; not something foisted on him by institutions but intrinsic to him. To Mann, the nineteenth century of which he considered himself a spiritual child, was more "honest" because it recognized man as what he was -- both passionate and reasonable, both rational and spiritual. The nineteenth century did not preach utopias. It no longer viewed man as only rational, but instead attempted to understand man in his entirety. In Mann's view, the eighteenth century had viewed the world in terms of

an ideal, the nineteenth refused to accept the rationalist assumptions of the past century and instead attempted to view the world in all the complexity. Reason, the idol of the eighteenth became the hand-maiden of the nineteenth; it became the tool of men concerned with understanding their individual and social existence, of men attempting to know themselves in their multi-faceted existence. Thus the century of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer was more honest in Mann's view, for it had rejected the dream world of the eighteenth century and instead attempted to understand itself and its environment.

The twentieth century, according to Mann, denied the heritage of the last century, and seemed to be a continuation of the eighteenth century. Again as in the eighteenth century, art was merely the organ of idealistic social reformers. Again the words of the philosophes permeated the political thought of the world; but not only was the optimistic message of a rosier future preached but those who did not believe were attacked by the high priests of progress. Mann drew the battle lines quite clearly. Just as the Sturm und Drang movement had declared Germany's literary independence a century and a half ago, Mann in 1915 declared the continued independence of Germany's intellect. The German nineteenth century, in Mann's view was under attack; Mann like, Lessing before, determined to defend German intellectual uniqueness.

Yet it was this new twentieth century, that Mann attempted to understand. Not in order to join forces with it, but in order to understand it and again find his place in relation to it; he sought to find his place, the place of the nineteenth century mind in this modern time. And it is this paradox of the nineteenth century man living in the twentieth century, which forced Mann to write the

Betrachtungen.

What am I? -- It was this question which forced me onto the "galley" and through "comparison" I attempted to find the answer. ⁶³

By comparing himself with the trends of his century Mann attempted to define his own philosophical position, and again find where he stood. It is in this light that Bertram's contention that the brother conflict was not central must be seen; the Betrachtungen was not only a rebuttal or defense against personal attacks, or perceived attacks, ⁶⁴ but an exposition of a particular world outlook. The war itself was not even important, but it involved the same problematics which brought issues to the fore; the war created the atmosphere in which the distinctions Thomas Mann made, and attempted to make, became important.

Mann viewed the Betrachtungen as a type of confession, for he saw the work as both a purging of his inner thoughts and the revelation of his own soul to the world. He viewed it as a painful work because of the personal conflicts which created it. The scholarly subject matter of the work created difficulties for Mann. He realized that he was neither a qualified philosopher nor sociologist. He saw himself as an artist attempting to tackle problems beyond the description and mastery of an artist. In spite of a certain awe of the task, he attempted to answer the question, "What am I?".

The problem he confronted was how to answer this question. He returned to the portrait of himself as the nineteenth century man for an answer. As such he saw himself as the man who is pessimistic because he cannot be optimistic and cope with the reality around him, the man who has read the aphorisms of Nietzsche and who saw that in the very method of Nietzsche is the method of the nineteenth century; ⁶⁵ no longer the method of system building to explain the philosophical problems of man, but a more realistic approach, a more disjointed and

immediate and personal approach to the problem of his own role and Weltanschauung.

The very form of the Betrachtungen reveals the spirit of the work. Sontheimer attempted to sketch briefly the chapters of the Betrachtungen in terms of a continuing structure. He wanted to find a tight logical construct, an overall plan and interlocking structure in terms of which the book could be analyzed. Such an attempt is useful only for purposes of determining that the work does not have a tight structural pattern. This result supports Mann's own contention that the work is "organic", in the sense that the nineteenth century itself defined organic:

Everything real is organic insofar as it can be conceived only as something related to the totality of reality and defined in its nature and movements by this totality.⁶⁶

The Betrachtungen is organic because the writer attempted to view everything in relation to everything else. Thus the personal fuses into the sphere of the socio-political, and social-political into the realm of the metaphysical-philosophical.

Mann realized this tendency all too well, and more than once in the Betrachtungen maintained that his book attempted to say everything at once.⁶⁷ For this was the only way he felt he could approach the problems he saw. Mann considered social, personal, national and even metaphysical problems as one. The consideration of any one element necessitated the mentioning and consideration of another. This type of approach, of course, involved a definite problem. As he said to Paul Amann, the Austrian philologist and friend, in a letter:

Truth can only be given embodiment, never be spoken
(whenever he speaks, man must for the moment become one-sided.)⁶⁸

It is because of the one-sidedness of a particular statement that Mann always attempted, either immediately or later in the same essay, to correct its one-sidedness. This led Hatfield to maintain that the Betrachtungen is repetitious, confused, wordy, and in all a mere collection of "pseudoprofundity".⁶⁹ Hatfield's characterization of the Betrachtungen was based on his failure to understand Mann's attempt to say everything at once, granted this attempt resulted in a lack of logical sequence within the work, but also served to increase the impact and realism of the work. Further, despite the lack of systemization, Mann's mode of thinking while writing the Betrachtungen can be discerned. This involves a study of the Betrachtungen in greater detail, and by contrasting the work with Heinrich Mann's "Zola" essay.

In his "Zola" essay, Heinrich developed his favorite theme of ever-ascending humanity resulting from the development of democracy. This ascending theme almost parallels the descriptions of a mystics ascent to heaven. The essay is easy to follow but the rapidity of the ascent creates in the reader a feeling of giddiness and unreality. It is easy to grasp the meaning of the essay because it is logically layered not only in terms of time a place, but also in terms of the continuing ascent of the development of ideas. Such is not the case with Thomas Mann's Betrachtungen. He did not make it easy for the reader to grasp the fundamental ideas, nor did he logically organize his work.

In part the confusion which seems to be intrinsic to every page of the Betrachtungen can be ascribed to the various motivations behind the work. In the Betrachtungen can be found a personal defense, a defense of Germany's intellectual atmosphere, and the portrayal of a

philosophic position. Thus the classification or systemization of the Betrachtungen's content becomes rather difficult, but not impossible, especially if Mann's method of thought and writing is taken into consideration.

Nietzsche is the clue to Mann's thought process. Mann considered Nietzsche the man who had taught the Germans how to write,^{69a} possibly because Mann realized that the methodology of the Betrachtungen is very similar to that of Nietzsche. Walter Kaufmann said that Nietzsche never solved problems, but only outgrew them.⁷⁰ By this he meant that Nietzsche's method did not aim at finding solutions, but only aimed at delving deeper into the problem and finding the underlying problem. The result of such a system is only the clarification of certain themes common to the surface multitude of questions. Mann in the Betrachtungen used a similar approach. What Hatfield called his "dualistic style",⁷¹ or Sontheimer his "dialectic",⁷² is Mann's formulation and statement of problems and their evolvment into themes.⁷³ The problems never disappear, instead they become part of a larger and more universal framework. By keeping in mind Mann's approach, by thinking of him as a problem thinker, the themes pertinent to his political social thought can be isolated and his thought clarified and catagorized.

In isolating the themes of Mann's social and political thought as revealed in the Betrachtungen it must be remembered that Mann's Betrachtungen is a complex work. It is highly personal, both in terms of the forces which motivated its writing, and in terms of its content. It is the work of a man who considered himself the child of the nineteenth century thrown into the alien world of the twentieth century. It is the work of a man who saw the destiny of his nation

closely tied with his own destiny. It is the work of a man, who though not a philosopher, showed himself to be part of the organic philosophical school, a man who felt that all problems were tied together and inseparable.

In considering the political thoughts of Thomas Mann, all these elements must be kept in mind in order that a proper understanding, at least of this limited aspect of his thought, can be achieved.

FOOTNOTES

- 1
Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Briefwechsel 1900-1949, ed. by Hans Wysling, (Frankfurt/M: S. Fischer Verlag, 1968), p. 108. "Ich bin noch immer wie im Traum, -und doch muß man sich jetzt wohl schämen, es nicht für möglich gehalten und nicht gesehen zu haben, daß die Katastrophe kommen mußte. Welche Heimsuchung! Wie wird Europa aussehen, innerlich und äußerlich, wenn sie vorüber ist?"
- 2
Thomas Mann, "Gedanken im Kriege," Die neue Rundschau, XXV (November, 1914), 1471-84.
- 3
Thomas Mann, Friedrich und die Große Koalition (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1915). Initially published under the same title in Der Neue Merkur (Jan., Feb., 1915).
- 4
Svenska Dagbladet, May 11, 1915. See also: Thomas Mann, "Gedanken zum Kriege," Die neue Rundschau, XXVI (1915), 830-836.
- 5
Philipp Witkop was a professor of German literature at the University of Freiburg according to Wer ist Wer (Berlin: 1928).
- 6
Thomas Mann, Briefe 1889-1936, einleitung von Erika Mann, (Frankfurt/M: S. Fischer Verlag, 1961), p. 110. In this letter dated November 2, 1914, Mann said: "Reine Journalistik ist das, was Sie in der Rundschau -- hoffentlich nicht sahen."
- 7
Romain Rolland, "Pro Aris," Cahiers Vaudois, 10 cahier (October, 1914).
- 8
The reason the reference appeared in the footnote was that Romain Rolland had written "Pro Aris" before he saw Mann's essay. See: Romain Rolland, "Pro Aris," in Above the Battle, trans. by C.K. Ogden (Chicago: Open Court Pub. Co., 1916), p. 28.
- 9
Ibid.
- 10
Thomas Mann, Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen, einleitung von Erika Mann (Frankfurt/M: S. Fischer Verlag, 1956).

This is the first edition of the Betrachtungen since 1919 that is true to the original published by S. Fischer Verlag, Berlin: 1918.

11

Kurt Sontheimer, Thomas Mann und die Deutschen (München: Nymphenburg Verlags Handlung, 1961), p. 15. Sontheimer views the Betrachtungen as the foundation of all Thomas Mann's political writings, and views the three war-time essays only in relation to the Betrachtungen.

12

Ibid., pp. 32-44. Sontheimer attempted to show a logical continuity in the chapters of the Betrachtungen. There is a continuity in the chapters, but the rigid logic which Sontheimer tries to apply is missing.

13

Ernst Keller, "Der Unpolitische Deutsche: Eine Studie zu den "Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen" von Thomas Mann (München: Franke Verlag, 1965), passim.

14

Martin Flinker, Thomas Mann's Politische Betrachtungen im Lichte der Heutigen Zeit (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1959).

15

Betrachtungen, "Vorrede", pp. 1-33. The introduction indicates the many ways in which Mann's work is a reflection of the intellectual turmoil Mann suffered during the years of the war.

16

Ibid., p. 23. Mann referred to democratic politics as "gift und Operment".

17

Thomas Mann, Letters to Paul Amann 1915-1952, ed. by Herbert Wegener, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (London: Secker & Warburg, 1961), p. 92. Mann's reference to the Betrachtungen is contained in his letter of June 30, 1917 to Paul Amann. At that point Mann was still in the process of writing the Betrachtungen. The correspondence between Mann and Paul Amann is extremely useful for the study of Mann's war-time writings. The correspondence began very close to the time at which Mann began the Betrachtungen and the problems Mann concerned himself with during the war-period found their way into the correspondence.

Amann, an Austrian philologist, served in the Hapsburg armies during the war, and he was held in high regard by Mann.

- 18
Ibid., p. 102. This reference to the Betrachtungen is in Mann's letter of July 11, 1918 addressed to Paul Amann.
- 19
Betrachtungen, p. 33.
- 20
Georg Lukacs, Essays on Thomas Mann, trans. by Stanley Mitchell (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965), p. 18.
- 21
Kurt Sontheimer, Thomas Mann und die Deutschen, p. 78
- 22
Martin Flinker, Thomas Mann's Politische Betrachtungen, p. 91. Flinker, who was a friend of Thomas Manns, attempted to defend Mann against charges of chauvinism and fascism. In his defense, Flinker toned down Mann's anti-democratic arguments in the Betrachtungen, and thus considerably distorted Mann's meaning.
- 23
Hans Kohn, The Mind of Germany: The Education of a Nation, (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 257.
- 24
Thomas Mann, Briefe 1889-1936, p. 147. This statement was contained in a letter to Kurt Martens dated September 9, 1918. "Ich muB wñnschen, daB man das Buch im rechten Sinn und Geiste liest, d.h. nicht eigentlich als 'Buch', welches irgendwie fñhren und zu Meinungen ùberreden will, sondern als Roman, als die Darstellung eines BewuBt erlebten und dabei schon innerlich distanzierten geistigen Schicksals."
- 25
Betrachtungen, pp. 3-4
- 26
Ibid., p. 3. See also: Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Briefwechsel 1900-1949, p. 113. In this letter written to his brother on January 3, 1918, Mann stressed the amount of work which he spent on the Betrachtungen.
- 27
Betrachtungen, p. 2.
- 28
Thomas Mann, Letters to Paul Amann, p. 40. The letter is dated August 3, 1915.
- 29
Thomas Mann, Briefe 1889-1936, p. 147. This is contained in Mann's letter to Kurt Martens dated September 9, 1918.

30

Betrachtungen, p. 4.

31

Ibid....

"dank nämlich den geistigen Zeitumständen, der Bewegtheit alles Ruhenden, der Erschütterung aller kulturellen Grundlagen, Kraft eines künstlerisch heillosen Gedankentumultes, der nackten Unmöglichkeit auf Grund eines Seins etwas zu machen." See also: Thomas Mann, Letters to Paul Amann, pp. 86, 87. In this letter dated March 25, 1917, Mann expressed the abyss-like nature of the work. By this time he felt he could again return to purely literary work, but he still had considerable work to do. In the letter he said: "...I had to write these Betrachtungen only because otherwise the novel [he was already planning the Zauberberg], as a result of the war, would have been unbearably overburdened intellectually."

32

Georges Fourrier, Thomas Mann: Le Message d'un Artiste-Bourgeois (Paris: Annales Littéraires de l'Université de Besançon, 1960), p. 219.

33

Heinrich Mann, "Zola" in Macht und Mensch (München: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1919). See Also: Heinrich Mann, "Zola", Die Weissen Blätter, Band 2, Pt. 4 (1915), 1312-82. The essay first appeared in the periodical, and was later incorporated into the collected essays in Macht und Mensch.

34

Heinrich Mann, "Zola" in Macht und Mensch, p. 115. "...das Schicksal eures Volkes etwa nicht durch laute patriotische Abenteuer, sondern in innerer Arbeit, innerem Fortschritt, was würde euch übrigbleiben, als dienend mitzuarbeiten, mit fortzuschreiten dienend. Aber ihr seid nicht zu dienen da, sondern zu glänzen und aufzufallen."

35

Ibid., p. 115

36

Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Briefwechsel, p. 111. In Heinrich's letter of December 30, 1917, addressed to Thomas Mann, is written. "In meinem, 'Zola' betitelten Protest war es, daß ich gegen die auftrat, die sich so mußte ich es ansehen, vordrängten, um zu schaden. Nicht gegen Dich nur, gegen eine Legion."

37

Ibid., p. 113.

Letter of Thomas Mann addressed to Heinrich; dated January 3,

1918. "Was hinter mir liegt, war eine Galeeren-Arbeit; immerhin danke ich ihr das Bewußtsein, daß ich Deiner zelotischen Suade heute weniger hilflos gegenüber stünde, als zu de Zeit, da Du mich bis auf Blut damit peinigen konntest."

38

Ibid., pp. 113, 114.

39

Kurt Sontheimer, Thomas Mann und die Deutschen, p. 30.
See also: Ernst Keller, p. 17.

40

Ernst Bertram in Introduction to Thomas Mann, Letters to Paul Amann, p. 43. To date I have not been able to find another source for this quotation.

41

Betrachtungen, p. 16.

42

Ibid., p. 7. "...daß kein Unterschied mehr Kenntlich war zwischen dem, was den einzelnen anging und nicht anging; alles war aufgeregt, aufgewühlt, die Probleme brausten ineinander und waren nicht mehr zu trennen, es zeigte sich der Zusammenhang, die Einheit aller geistigen Dinge, die Frage des Menschen selbst stand da, und die Vervantwortlichkeit vor ihr umfaßte auch die Notwendigkeit politischer Stellungnahme und Willenentschliessung."

43

Ibid., p. 7.

44

Ibid., p. 11. "Denn dieser intime Konflikt spielt im Geistigen, und er besitzt ohne allen Zweifel genug symbolische Würde, um ein Recht auf Öffentlichkeit zu haben und folglich, dargestellt, nicht schipflich zu wirken."

45

Heinrich Mann's "Zola" essay is an excellent example of this type of thought.

46

Betrachtungen, p. 12. "...Ausdruck der Problematic, des Da und Dort, des Ja und Nein, der zwei Seelen in einer Brust, des schlimmen Reichtums an inneren Konflikten, Gegensätzen, und Widersprüchen."

47

Klaus Schwabe, "Zur Politischen Haltung der deutschen Professoren im Ersten Weltkrieg, "Historische Zeitschrift,

CXCIII (1961), 601-634. See also: Thomas Mann, Letters to Paul Amann, pp. 55-56. Schwabe pointed out that most German professors, Meineke, Troeltsch, and even Delbruck were annexationists. Mann's letter to Amann dated October 1915, suggests that a German victory involving European or other annexations would be deplorable.

48

Thomas Mann, Letters to Paul Amann, p. 88. The letter is dated March 25, 1917.

49

A. G. Meyer, "The Concept of Culture in Germany and Russia," in Culture, edited by A. L. Kroeber (New York: Vintage Books 1952), p. 403.

49a

Karl Jöel, Wandlungen der Weltanschauung: Eine Philosophiegeschichte als Geschichtsphilosophie, Band II (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr Verlag, 1934), p. 921. Jöel makes clear the association between elemental, basic life and Kultur; both are phenomena of nature itself.

50

Betrachtungen, p. 162. Mann compared Kultur and Zivilization, and found that Kultur excluded not even "blutige Wildheit". Because it is a phenomena of nature, Kultur accepts life as it is, it does not attempt to tame life.

51

Ibid., p. 25.

52

Ibid., p. 25. See also: Max Scheler, "Der Genius des Krieges," Die Neue Rundschau, XXV (1914), 1331. Scheler argued that the war was not caused by economic differences, but by affronts to national honor. This position is similar to Mann's.

53

Thomas Mann, Letters to Paul Amann, p. 97. The personal element of the Betrachtungen is attested to in a letter dated March 2n, 1918. The intimacy and personal nature of the work is reflected in a statement in that letter. Mann, speaking of the publication of his book felt that the only redeeming factor in the work were its "human elements".

54

Betrachtungen, p. 15.

55

Ibid., p. 17.

56

Ibid., p. 17.

57

Just as this movement attempted to declare German literary independence from French Neo-classicism, Mann attempted to declare Germany's independence in the realm of thought.

58

Betrachtungen, p. 14.

59

Helen P. Liebel, Enlightened Bureaucracy versus Enlightened Despotism in Baden, 1750-1792, American Philosophical Society Transaction, New Series, LV, 5 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1965), pp. 72-73.

60

Betrachtungen, p. 160. Mann referred to Romain Rolland's attacks on the article "Gedanken im Kriege".

61

This declaration of independence is the main theme of the Betrachtungen's chapter "Der Protest".

62

Fritz Stern, The Politics of Cultural Despair, (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1965), p. 258. Stern said: "Thomas Mann's Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen was the classic example of this effort to define the essence of Germanism." Similarly Lessing's Hamburg Dramaturgy (1768-1769) was an attempt to define drama. From this grew Lessing's urging that Germans should develop their own forms of drama. Mann and Lessing revolted against French domination.

63

Betrachtungen, p. 13.

64

Ibid., p. 11.

65

Ibid., p. 65. Mann argues that Nietzsche was important for Germany and himself not so much in the content of his teaching, but more in "die Art in der er lehrte."

66

Ferdinand Tönnies, Community and Society, trans. and ed. by Charles P. Loomis (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1963), p. 35. Tönnies work, entitled "Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft (1887), is a particularly good source for a definition of the organic type of philosophy because he is contrasting what may be called the organic social organization or community, with a

mechanical societal structure. Further, Tönnies definition is not too heavily burdened with mystical overtones, and is thus similar to Mann's notion.

The organic idea is at present again receiving attention. See: Alan W. Watts, Psychotherapy East and West (New York: Ballantine Books Inc., 1960), p. 33. Watts maintains that modern psychotherapy is again discovering that "the richer and more articulate our picture of man and of the world becomes, the more we are aware of its relativity and of the interconnection of all its patterns in an individual whole."

67

Betrachtungen, pp. 3-4. Mann refers to the work involved as "unending" (unendlich), and also the multiple aspects of the work.

68

Thomas Mann, Letters to Paul Amann, p. 33. The letter is dated February 2, 1915.

69

Henry Hatfield, Thomas Mann: An Introduction to His Fiction (Norfolk Conn.: New Directions Book, 1951), p. 65.

69a

Betrachtungen, pp. 65-66.

70

Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Anti-Christ (3rd Rev. ed., New York: Random House, 1968), p. 82.

71

Henry Hatfield, Thomas Mann, p. 65.

72

Kurt Sontheimer, Thomas Mann und die Deutschen, p. 41

73

Vernon Venable, "Poetic Reason in Thomas Mann," Virginia Quarterly Review, XIV (1938), 62.

CHAPTER II

THE VISION OF GERMANY

In an extremely illuminating and enlightening essay, Ernst Kahler portrayed Thomas Mann as a "man of the spirit".

We call a man of spirit him, and him only, for whom supra-personal problems and decisions are a personal concern, one who no longer distinguishes between the personal and supra-personal, since in his innermost passionate efforts he has completely identified himself with these questions.¹

A man of the spirit is one who has internalized problems which are beyond the self, one who sees the harmony between the self and the outside world. It is in such a context that both Thomas Mann's Betrachtungen and Mann's attitude toward Germany must be understood. To the author of the Betrachtungen, Germany was more than a political and geographical entity, more than the land of his birth. It was for him, part of the self, not only in the sociological sense of the interaction between the environment and the individual, but in the sense that the self and the nation are bound together in a common national spirit. This spirit can most generally be defined as containing those historical and environmental elements which the individual shares with the community of the nation as a whole, those elements which are alive and acting in the individual's epoch. Because it is felt to be alive, this spirit is not merely an abstraction, but a reality which appears to exist and acts as a unifying factor between the self and the nation, and, therefore, forms a reality at a level beyond both.²

It is this spirit which to some degree, as already stated in the first chapter, was the foundation of the Betrachtungen, and which J.J. Weigand, author of a critique on the Magic Mountain, saw as coming

to the fore in the years of the First World War.

It was during the War that Mann came to regard himself as singled out to plead the case of spiritual Germany before God and Man. He came to regard himself as the incarnation of the German conscience.³

It is not insignificant that in the first chapters of the Betrachtungen Mann immediately concerned himself with the spirit of Germany. Many intellectuals, Mann maintained, saw the war only as a blood bath and a useless waste of Europe's resources and men.⁴ This, they said, was its only significance. But Mann asked what if the French Revolution were divested of its philosophical and political significance, would not murder and the change of property from one hand to another be all that remained? Surely, he argued, this would be an injustice to the French Revolution, and a distortion of its historical significance. For him the war of 1914 could no less be viewed as only a blood-bath but had also to be analyzed for some meaning. For Mann it was impossible that millions should die for no apparent reason, or for the sake of mere border changes and geographical expressions. He therefore looked for the meaning and significance of the conflict in Europe.⁵ He did not look for the war's significance in terms of power balances, trade routes, or economic principles. Mann based his position on the unstated premise that men would not live or die for such causes. He saw the conflict between Germany and the Entente in terms of the German spirit. Basically, Mann held that Germany's spirit is different from that of the other European nations and this crucial difference caused the war.⁶

Golo Mann, the historian and son of Thomas Mann, found his father's attempt to explain the conflict quite unrelated to reality.⁷ Though this may well be the case, Mann's attempt to find a lofty meaning

in the war does throw light on his thought processes. First, it reveals the notion that events do not just happen, they have a significance and meaning in terms of a greater totality. Second, it reveals that in Mann's view, this meaning is beyond the realm of appearance, that there is a spiritual and perhaps even metaphysical meaning to events which makes the catastrophic bearable and lends an eternal quality to events and ideas. Both these notions found expression in Thomas Mann's portrayal of the uniquely German, and appeared in Mann's description of the German spirit.

In the first chapter of the Betrachtungen, Mann sketched one of the most important aspects of the German spirit. Quoting Dostoievski, Mann maintained that Germany is, and always has been, the protesting nation. Its protest which he sketched for almost two thousand years, is against Western Europe and its ideas. First, Germany fought against the Roman Empire and its attempt to create a universal empire, then it revolted against the Church of Rome and its attempt to create a Christian commonwealth. The latest protest and revolt of Germany against the West, Mann along with Dostoievski saw as the German revolt⁸ against the ideas of the French Revolution. Just as the Roman Emperors and Popes attempted to establish world empire in the name of their particular ideologies and creeds, the French Revolution attempted to establish a universal empire. This latest Western attempt Mann viewed as nothing more than a modernized version of the earlier attempts; instead of establishing the hegemony of the Emperor, or the Pope, the revolution attempted to create world domination in the name of the bourgeoisie.⁹ Germany revolted against the attempts of the West to incorporate the lands stretching from the Rhine to the Elbe in the

past; for Mann the clouds of war which broke over Europe in 1914 were nothing more than a continuation of the German battle to remain free of Western domination. The Great War was the attempt of Germany to remain itself, it was a revolt against the ideas of the French Revolution and the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. Mann raised this historical sketch to absolute proportions, quoting Dostoievski on Germany:

The most characteristic and essential feature of this great, proud and unique people has been that since the first moment of its appearance in world history, it has never--neither in its disposition nor in its basic principles--wanted to unite itself with the external Western World, that is with the heirs of the ancient Roman tradition.¹⁰

In general, Mann viewed Germany as the protesting nation attempting to remain free of the West, but he included the idea of the "land of the Middle". This idea of Germany between East and West, enunciated by Adam Müller in the early nineteenth century¹¹ again found expression in Thomas Mann when he spoke of the "isolation between East and West".¹² Friedrich Naumann expressed a similar notion in his Central Europe when he wrote that the Germans live in:

...the land of passage for all the migrations of the peoples, in the battlefield of all the great intellectual struggles, in the religious wars, of fights about nationality....in a region which neither affords nor can possess inward ease because it is too full for mere classification.¹³

Initially the Betrachtungen presented the notion of Germany as the nation between East and West as a parallel theme to that of Germany as the protesting nation, but eventually the portrait of Germany as the land of the middle becomes an undercurrent overwhelmed by the notion of Germany as the land of protest. For Rome is no longer only the nation

of the West, but "is almost everywhere in the East, in the South, even in the North and on the other side of the oceans".¹⁴ Reflecting Germany's strategic position, Mann argued that the war has united the West and its spiritual children throughout the world. And as Mann observed even Tsarist Russia has joined the fight. Germany stands alone.

Reflecting on these two views of Germany which Mann presented, it becomes clear that the very isolation of Germany is one of the main features of his analysis of Germany's place in European history. Like the romantics at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Mann saw the spirit of Germany as uniquely different from the spirit of the rest of Europe. The very acts of protest revealed to him that Germany had consciously resisted the efforts of the rest of Europe to draw her into its spheres of political and intellectual influence. The war itself, in Mann's view, was such a conscious effort of resistance. Mann, like the social philosopher Troeltsch and the novelist Wasserman,¹⁵ attempted to establish that Germany was both different, and that its difference from the rest of Europe was to be considered a timeless and vital one. The Betrachtungen portrayed the German spirit as constantly aware of its uniqueness and reveling in it. Mann could easily have applied Ranke's dictum concerning the national spirit:

To stand still: that would be death; imitation; it is already a form of slavery; self education and development: that is life and freedom.¹⁶

The spirit of Germany must live and develop in order to remain free.

The author of the Betrachtungen did not define "spirit" very precisely, but he did maintain that the German nation can be

17
likened to a "mythical personality", a description which is both enlightening and confusing. Revealed is the idea that the nation is very similar to a living organism, certainly in this attitude Mann followed the German school of historical thought.¹⁸ The nation like a person has a life and development of its own independent of its parts; the nation is something greater than the sum of its citizens. The use of personality in Mann's characterization also reveals that he thought of the nation in terms of character traits of its own, character traits which while shared by members of the nation, belong to the nation as an entity and are independent of the members comprising the nation. The problem with Mann's characterization, which he attempted to overcome with the adjective "mythical" is in what sense is the nation a personality at all? Is the nation a type of super-person, or is the use of the word "personality" merely a convenient way of describing actions and changes on the part of the national collectivity? If Mann was merely describing the spirit of the nation as something resembling a human organism, then his characterization can be dismissed as a mere literary metaphor expressing the idea that a nation seems to have a life and characteristics of its own. If, however, Mann did mean that it truly is a personality, then a problem of interpretation is created. He could then have said that a nation's spirit is an objective reality and has an existence of its own. In this case the spirit of the nation could be similar to a Platonic form, a spirit which has its own existential position outside the concrete and empirical foundations of the nation itself.

The adjective "mythical" gives some additional clues to the way Mann wished to have his readers understand his characterization

of the national spirit. A myth while usually not referring to anything concrete existing in the present, or in the past, does however usually contain some germinal idea which has pertinence to all men in all times and places. It is in such a light that Mann considered Germany's spirit. For him the debate as to whether there is an existent spirit or not was really quite academic. The important aspect of his characterization is first, that the spirit like a myth has its roots in the past and that it still exists and has meaning in the present. Such is the case with the spirit of Germany. It is, as he says, something which has been since the appearance of Germans in history and which he maintains is still with them.¹⁹ Further, like a myth, the spirit of Germany was seen by Mann to have relevance even in his time because it was felt to be still alive, it seemed to influence and permeate the German way of life and thought. These are perhaps the most important aspects of Mann's characterizations of the German spirit: that it has an eternal aspect to it and that it appears to be alive and relevant.

While Mann lacked clarity in his discussion of Germany's national spirit, he was much more lucid when he described the national character and way of life. This he called Kultur.²⁰ Like the spirit which molds it, Kultur was a historically developing process and at the same time a concrete social phenomenon. Mann also included in the concept the notion that Kultur is a cohesive metaphysical entity. A certain amount of confusion exists in Mann's notion of Kultur and its significance in the Betrachtungen is quite polemical. Its chief function is to show the difference in the way of life and thought of the Germans from the ways of thought and life of the Western peoples. For him the West had civilization, Germany had Kultur.

Again, as with his concern with the spirit of Germany, Kultur was used by Mann to differentiate the concrete manifestation of the German national spirit from that of Western civilization. In a war essay preceding the Betrachtungen, Kultur was defined as:

...a manifestation of Nature, it is unity in itself, form, bearing, taste...intellectual organization of the world and acceptance of this even if this be ever so adventurous, absurd, wild, bloody and terrible.²¹

Kultur is a very primitive life style, almost elemental; it is the life style or primitive nature not shackled by rationalist conventions or artificial rules. Kultur is the expression of the German spirit and both this national spirit and Kultur have vitality because they are manifestations of nature itself given style and form. In contrast to civilization, Kultur is extremely elemental and unrefined. Anticipating the distinction Oswald Spengler made between Kultur and civilization, Mann, by characterizing the German life form as "wild, bloody, and terrible" gave the idea that Kultur is the expression of a nation still capable of development. By implication its contrasting Western equivalent, civilization, has lost its meaning and vitality. This was similar to Spengler's distinction between the vital stage of a people's culture and the rigid and moribund stage which he termed civilization.²²

Unlike Spengler, Mann did not attempt to show the contrast between a vital and a moribund civilization in terms of the social or political realms of human life. He was not primarily concerned with showing concrete examples of the difference between German Kultur and Western civilization, rather he wished to establish that there was a difference.²³ He did this by contrasting the manner in which Kultur and civilization respectively manifest their world outlooks.

Mann did this by again consulting Dostoievski who maintained that while the Germans have always stood in silent opposition to the West, they have not propagandized their own philosophy of life, nor have they attempted to spread it throughout the world as did the Roman world and its heirs.²⁴ And Mann maintains that it is perhaps not so much the resistance to the West, as the silence of the resistance which has caused Germany to be so suspiciously regarded by the West. He claimed that it was:

...not so much the resistance itself, but more its lack of expression and inarticulateness which civilization found hateful and "barbaric".²⁵

This statement deserves some clarification, especially Mann's characterization of the Germans as inarticulate. Obviously the nation which produced Goethe, Kant and Hegel cannot be called inarticulate, nor can it be accused of lacking systematic-thinkers. Mann would have agreed thus far. But he would have gone further and argued that Germany, unlike the West, has not made a systematic philosophy its official ideology and attempted to foist it on others, as the West had done. Mann's position has some justification in light of Western war propaganda which publicised the war as one in defense of democracy.²⁶ Mann's characterization of Germany as inarticulate has a further root which must be clarified. The Sturm und Drang movement had revolted against French neo-classicism and its domination of Germany literary life in the middle of the eighteenth century. Unlike Lessing and Herder, Mann however does not stress that the Germans should develop their own literature or style, this had already been accomplished. Instead he stressed the dominance of literature as a phenomenon of the West and as a typical expression of France and Western civilization.

Mann called civilization literary, that is it possesses the means of expressing its attitude to life and has formulated its attitude toward it.

The literary humanity--the legacy of Rome; the classical spirit; classical reason; the generous word to which belongs the generous deed; the beautiful, uplifting and humanly worthy phrase; the beauty and worth-of-humanity praising phrase; the academic art of speaking in praise of human beings--this is what makes life worth living and makes man, man in the Roman West. It is the spirit which was ascendent in the period of the revolution--its spirit, its "classical model"; the same spirit which in the Jacobin hardened into a Scholastic literary formula, into a murderous doctrine, into a tyranny of schoolmaster-pedantics.²⁷

But this attitude, while in praise of humanity, Mann viewed as nothing more than pedantry, merely a scholastic exercise and propaganda issued to ensure the rule of the bourgeoisie. It was to him nothing more than hypocrisy, a leveling of life's problems through words, a mere simplification of the complexities of life; a simplification which in the process of simplifying destroyed the meaning and essence of existence. Granted, said Mann, it is rational and optimistic concerning man's future but is it true to what life actually is? Perhaps an even more damning accusation Mann hurled at the West was that the exponents of civilization did not even question their philosophy; only insisted on preaching it as dogma.²⁸

The German, the man of Kultur, in contrast does not have a logically formulated world outlook, he is in this sense not literary. Instead the German, as Mann and Troeltsch both said, expresses himself
29
through music, and poetry. Both of these modes of expression are more mysterious, circuitous in the approach they take to problems and even as to the subjects they choose. They are not modes used by the West, for both have a too "irresponsible and therefore too unreliable role" in the propagating of the notions of virtue as portrayed by the

literateurs of the West. Music as Weigand says is:

...politically suspect, because its stimulation is essentially vague and non-committal. As pure form, pledged to no specific content and ideas, it is non-ethical; to the extent, therefore that it acquired a dominating influence over man it is an obstacle in the path of activity and progress. From the point of view of a philosophy of life committed to action, music is a dangerous opiate....³¹

But not only is music an opiate, in Mann's view it is also a more real and more exact reproduction of reality. The written word by the very structure of composition and method of communication is too logical too straightforward, it allows for no undertones, sub-themes, underlying currents of mood or thought. Music does exactly this, it allows for the expression of the complexity of life because by its very nature, it ties together units which alone are unpleasant to the ear, perhaps even untrue, and yet ties them together in one harmonious whole. Mann viewed this as a much more satisfactory way of portraying reality. Life is not arranged according to a logical progressive theme, it is a confusion of multiple experiences, there is no key word or idea which can untie the mystery of human existence, but it is rather a confusion of ideas. For Mann, it is only the experience of life by the individual himself which gives harmony to the separate aspects. Mann saw himself and the German nation as realizing that human existence cannot be simplified in the name of progress or rationality. This is perhaps the key idea which the German spirit expressed for him.

The Germans see the world not in terms of rationality, or logic, but in its totality, which excludes not even "bloody wildness".³² They are not captivated by ideology or an optimistic notion of the world, rather they attempt to view things as they actually are.

Addressing himself to Romain Rolland, Thomas Mann portrayed the attitude of the German toward life:

I am no systematizer, nor a doctrinaire; I do not frown at the shameless delusions of dogmatism, and I will never sit down with a truth I consider to be a truth and for the rest of my life feast on this truth. I could not do this for I would be wearied and disgusted and I have too much of a vital need for new, fresh, and refreshing truth. All our thoughts are only a moment of our lives....What good would life be, if not to expand our hearts and minds daily? ³³

Weigand maintained that the difference in Weltanschauung between Mann's portrayal of Germany and the outlook of civilization is one between irrationality and rationality.³⁴ Indeed, there are overtones of irrationality in Thomas Mann's portrayal of the German spirit, but this does not amount to anti-rationalism. Mann was merely attempting to show that the liberalism of the West, by portraying the world as rational and attempting to make men act in accord with the rational world image, was distorting the world. Liberalism shut its eyes to the reality of ignorance, of fanaticism, of criminal behaviour; ignored those things which could not be explained by mere logic or reason. The author of the Betrachtungen attempted to point out that all aspects of life neither conform to, nor are subject to reason. And the virtue of the German world-outlook in Mann's argument is that it accepted the world as it is, not only the rational but also the irrational and the mysterious.

One of the most striking things about Mann's thought on the spirit of the German nation, is the close parallel between his ideas and attitudes, and those of the German Romantics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Like the Romantics, Mann did not favor rational-logical thought which seemed to him overly mechanistic and barren. Instead, Mann looked at the German nation in terms of a

traditional development, and again like the Romantics saw Germany not as a mechanism composed of individual human units, but rather as a living organism.³⁵ Using state and nation as interchangeable notions, Friedrich Schlegel maintained:

Every state is an independent entity existing for itself, each absolutely must be its own master, each has its own specific character and rules itself according to its own laws, customs and traditions.³⁶

Schlegel's concept of specific character is very similar to the notion of "mythical personality" presented by Mann. Like the Romantics, Mann saw life expressed in music and in poetry. Mann resembled the Romantics in that he opposed a rational-logical world outlook and advocated what he felt was a less precise but more correct expression of the world. Both Mann and the Romantics favored a more mysterious, more metaphysical representation of the world and thus both are tinged with an anti-rationalism which is not so much concerned with consistency and logical integration, but stressed instead the representation of human experience in all its manifestations whether they are consistent with each other or not;³⁷ this is exactly the strength Thomas Mann sees in the Germans. They are a people who go beyond the interpretation of life in terms of a "single idea" and constantly look for development in ideas, and new ideas and representations of their world.³⁸

Also, Romantic was Thomas Mann's stress on the uniqueness of the German nation and its spirit. Like the Romantics, Mann interpreted this uniqueness as part of the eternal order of the world. Friedrich Meinecke characterized the Romantic conception of the essential diversity within the unity of the universe:

This is the idea; that the universe contains within itself an unending multitude of individuality, which does not thereby dissolve or destroy its unity, rather it is strengthened so that the universe itself is a personality and an individual being.³⁹

Mann stressed the individuality of Germany, the notion that Germany has its own destiny and its own character which it must develop untrammelled by the fetters of alien cultures. This notion which runs from Herder through all the Romantics and the school of German historicism presents the Germans as the unique people, and perhaps even the superior people. Mann also accepted the Romantic view that Germany was the new Greece, the new Menschheitsnation, the nation of humanity, destined to create a new world outlook as the Greeks had done in ancient times; Mann's view of Germany was similar. Because the Germans have an inquiring and unconfined nature, unlike that of the civilized West which is restricted to the path of reason and logic, the German nation has a better and truer grasp of the actual world, and therefore has a superior ability to solve the problem of humanity.⁴⁰

Despite the stress on the unique aspects of the German spirit, and the little veiled assumption of the superiority of that spirit, the idea of universality was not neglected. For the Romantics, the world is composed of individualities which together make a harmony. In the particular case of the German nation, the Romantics argued that Germany is different, but in a special way; the German nation had incorporated into its spirit all the best values and ideas that men had developed everywhere. Germany was more human because of this and they termed Germany the Menschheitsnation. It is in this sense that Adam Müller saw Germany as the land of the middle; it incorporated within itself all the best features of the West and also of Eastern cultures.⁴¹

Mann had a similar view. He like Müller believed in both the superiority of the German spirit, and the notion that Germany incorporates within itself all the features of a truly human culture.⁴² Thus he like the Romantics made the transition from cultural nationalism to a universal humanism.

Mann began this argument by maintaining that Germany is not a nation in the sense that France and England are nations. He again reiterated the notion that Germany is the battleground for European ideas, and from this argued that Germany unlike the nations of the West does not have a single unifying idea or heritage but has a blend of many.⁴³ Mann maintained that his nation is one:

...that is not a nation in the same concrete sense that the English and French are nations, nor is it even likely to be, because its cultural history [Bildungsgeschichte], and its concept of humanity are opposed to that of the West; it is a country whose inner unity and completeness is complicated--indeed suspended--by its intellectual contrasts; a country where these conflicts are more violent, more thorough, more evil, and less open to compromise than elsewhere; this is because in this land conflicts are little or very loosely influenced and restricted by the national ethos; they are barely incorporated in a total or composite outlook, as is the case with conflicting opinions in every other nation.⁴⁴

In this statement Mann is arguing that Germany, unlike any other nation, has no set identity. Its national spirit is a free one which gives it uniqueness, universality of interest, and a European flavor. Mann argued that for this reason Germany is the only truly European nation, for within its soul the "europäische Gegensätze", the European conflicts, are fought out. The contradictions of German thought are not due to a national feeling, but rather due to Germany's European heritage.⁴⁵ Thus the German soul, both as a collectivity, and in terms of the individual, contains contradictions.

And when I say "the German soul", then I mean not only the soul of the nation in total, but I also mean the undivided soul, head and heart of a German. I mean even myself. ⁴⁶

The "Zivilizationsliterat" was also an example of these contradictions. Mann argued that this type of German, who is literary rather than musical, who advocates rationality as the highest and only true form and method of knowledge, who sees France the highest degree of perfection achieved by humanity, and who longs for the day when Germany's social and political institutions will be modelled after those of France, is nonetheless German. Mann did not see this type of German as a traitor to his country in spite of the longing of the Zivilizationsliterat for a French victory in the war during which the Betrachtungen was written. This type of German was not "undeutsch" to Mann because he saw the essence of Germanness as being only an "Abgrund", ⁴⁷ or abyss, in which existed countless ideas. The Zivilizationsliterat who was quite willing to sacrifice Germany's uniqueness for the sake of being one with Western civilization, was a perfect example of the nature of Germanness:

Germanness is an Abyss, let us hold fast to that, shall we! He [der Zivilizationsliterat] is not un-German, he is only a surprising and noteworthy example of how far the German can take self-disgust and self-denial, how far he can carry his cosmopolitanism and his self assertion even today in the post-Bismarckian Reich. ⁴⁸

Despite Mann's evident sarcasm, this is a perfect example of what he means by Germanness; it is not the maintenance of a particular ideology or a distinct or precise way of life; rather it is a backdrop, a stage on which the ideas of all Europeans express themselves. This Mann considered to be the cosmopolitanism, the universalism of the Germans. ⁴⁹

And he maintains that it has always been part of the German spirit to

tend toward the cosmopolitan and the universal aspects of humanity rather than national ones; "that perhaps one has to lose one's Germanness, in order to find it".⁵⁰

With this statement Mann again affirms his unity with the Romantic tradition. Friedrich Meinecke defined the attitude of the early Romantics toward the essence of being German, in the phrase--
 "It is un-German to be only German".⁵¹ The German for Mann, as for the Romantics, was however not an internationalist but a humanist. This was the element that gave him his supernational quality and allowed him to accept foreign ideas. The German mind was constantly striving for greater understanding and insight into the human condition. And thus it was in essence cosmopolitan and universal.⁵²

Thus Mann considered the German spirit superior because it was the voice of humanism. Western civilization had transformed its humanistic tradition into politics, party slogans and pleasant sounding rhetoric.⁵³ Erich Kahler presented Mann's view of German humanism as one which encouraged:

...organic cultivation of profound inner values against the quicksand of material well-being; Germany represented that which was living and genuine in opposition to the merely superficially esthetic, oratorical and literary; she stood for the eternal spirit against ephemeral existence, against mere economic activity and its restlessness.⁵⁴

Kahler saw in Mann an affirmation of the eternal values of Germany over those of the West. This was Mann's basic position. But though he now could give some meaning to the war, the soul of Mann was still troubled, for in solving one problem he had created another. He had described the spirit of Germany and contrasted the literate rationality of the West with the poetic soul of Germany in order to understand why

Germany stood alone, an isolated nation under attack. He had attempted to show that the German spirit thrusts deeper into the problems of humanity than the superficial spirit of the West. But Mann realized that his characterization of the German spirit was incomplete. The task remained to estimate the influence of the West on the spirit of Germany. He wrote with great distaste of the German exponent of Western civilization, the Zivilizationsliterat. Although granting that the Zivilizationsliterat was German, he viewed this type of German as a mere fabricator of dreams who attempted to bring the empyrean ideals of the Western democrats into the realm of actuality, or even more unfavorably as a hypocrite who attempted to foist himself and the bourgeois class on the people. While speaking in the name of ideals, the Zivilizationsliterat was actually motivated by very mercenary and callous considerations.⁵⁵ Mann's problem was that at the same time he had to recognize the great contribution of the West and of the Zivilizationsliterat to German culture. Though he attempted to continue his earlier metaphor and view the distinction between the West and Germany as the difference between literature and music, Mann realized that any such distinction was vague and that he himself, a novelist and literateur who professed to be thoroughly German, contradicted this distinction in his own person. He was forced to realize that in the early nineteenth century it was the men of letters who created the concept of a Kulturnation and who more than composers were responsible for the creation of a national German ethos.⁵⁶ Mann himself is more closely akin to the litterateurs of the West than he would care to admit in the context of this argument.⁵⁷

It was not only the form of expression, but also the spirit of the West that left its mark on Germany and Mann. The ideas of development, logical progress, and the political and social conscience of the West left their mark on the German mind. Mann was aware of the dreams of world unity, of technical and political progress, the reign of an antiseptic and virtuous world order without adventure and mystery: they had all entered Germany. As an artist Mann found this trend repugnant. Into a world of excitement and adventure, reason and logic brought academic pedantry; a world where art and music had thrived was being replaced by one in which every aspect of life became an empirical question; the search for true solutions was being replaced by expedient solutions; beauty was being quantified and becoming banal.⁵⁸ Yet at the same time he also recognized an inevitability in the changes taking place in the world and battling against them was like battling against one's fate. More than once in the Betrachtungen he recognized that domination by the West, its ideas and its institutions might well be the trend of the future, but he says:

One can consider Progress as inevitable and as decreed by fate, without being in the least disposed to urge it on with hurrahs and hussahs--which I would think, would hardly be necessary for Progress.⁵⁹

With this sarcasm he battled against the ideas of the West which he saw taking root even in Germany, ideas which would destroy its uniqueness, which would make his fatherland similar to the nations of the West, which would deprive the Germany he knew of its intellectual ferment. But Mann realized that he had not succeeded in positing a basic distinction between his fatherland and the West, for he had still not answered the question of what is specifically German and unrelated

to Western influences. The problem of what is German still remained. The very formulation of the uniqueness of Germany shows itself to be problematic. He characterized Germany as a nation which is unique because it is more tied to the actual world, and argued that this approach has greater truth than the dogmatism of the West. Since truth is by its very nature universal, this greater truth gives his land a universality; it raises the unique to the universal. At this point Mann's argument runs into difficulty again. Mann argued that Germany is unique because it possesses the universal values of humanity. He also argued, however, that each nation must develop its own ways of life, its own approach to existence. Thus he could say that parliaments and parliamentary institutions are suited to Britain, and that the ideas of the French Revolution are natural to France. Should it not follow that the German spirit is most suited to Germany? But Mann tried to push the argument further. When it suited him, he maintained (like Ranke) that each nation has its own truth, its own forms of development, its own institutions which it must develop.⁶⁰ At the same time, however, he argued that Germany is superior because it has a greater grasp of the truth than any other nation. In this way he fell into the very error of which he accuses the West. Like the West which claimed to have discovered the true meaning of history and the true way to human progress, Mann claimed in a similarly dogmatic manner that Germany is superior to other nations.⁶¹ Mann was aware of his logical inconsistency but also realized that this is the position that he must maintain if he were to claim that Germany's mission was to be truly eternal. For if its mission is eternal then its Weltanschauung cannot be relative but must be absolute. And therefore too, he must claim, as

he did, that the German way is superior to all others and that the German destiny is the only true one.

Mann must claim too that Germany is not an ordinary nation because its culture has more than a national significance:

The German nation cannot possess a character in the same sense that other nations have one, because it has through literature and the cultivation of reason generalized and developed itself into a leading nation, in which the whole of humanity is beginning to see its teachers and educators. Yes, we are, we were, we will remain the schoolmasters, the philosophers, the theologians, the religious teachers of all of Europe and the whole world.⁶²

The German nation is to be the teacher of all mankind. This is a typically German idea and can be traced back to the early nineteenth century Romantics. Mann found confirmation of this notion in Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer. It was in the existence of this essentially unique mission of the German nation that Mann found the key to understanding the confrontation between Germany and the West.

Mann's concept of the German spirit is bestrewn with problems. The nature of this spirit is vague, its very uniqueness can be questioned, yet the problem which Mann attempted to come to grips with is clear. He attempted to define Germany and found that his characterizations were still too vague. He described his image of Germany in terms of an eternal spirit, but he failed to come to grips with the problem of constant change.

FOOTNOTES

1

Erich Kahler, "The Responsibility of the Spirit", in The Stature of Thomas Mann, ed. by Charles Neider (New York: New Directions Book, 1947) p. 443.

2

H. J. Weigand, The Magic Mountain (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1964), p. 112. Weigand concerned himself with the definition of national character in connection with Thomas Mann's Der Zauberberg, and he said: "The term national character, properly used, is nothing other than a concentrated symbol for those features of a national community's past development and environment that are felt as still alive and recognizably active in that community in a given moment. As such it is an abstraction and at the same time a reality of a higher order".

3

Ibid., p. 99. See also: Thomas Mann, Kultur und Sozialismus, in Gesammelte Werke, ed. by Hans Burgin, XII (Frankfurt/M: S. Fischer Verlag, 1960), 640. This essay which originally appeared in the Preußische Jahrbücher (Band 212, H. 1, 1928) contained the following reference to the Betrachtungen: "Die Betrachtungen sind das Werk einer langen, tiefen und schmerzlichen Hingabe an ein Problem, das damals zum allerpersönlichsten und lebensgegenwärtigsten geworden war, das Problem des Deutschtums...."

4

Betrachtungen, p. 37.

5

Ibid.

6

Golo Mann, The History of Germany since 1789, trans. by Marian Jackson (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968), p. 370.

7

Ibid.

8

Betrachtungen, pp. 34-40.

9

Ibid., p. 44.

10

F.M. Dostoievsky, "The Germanic World Problem. Germany is a Protesting Country", in The Dairy of a Writer, trans. by Boris Brasol, Vol. II (Toronto: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1949), p. 729. See also: Betrachtungen, p. 35.

11

Henry Cord Meyer, Mitteleuropa in German Thought and Action 1815-1945, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1955), p. 31.

Meyer's study is an excellent one on the theme of Mitteleuropa. In light of his study, it is most likely that Mann's ideas of Germany as the "land of the middle" were gleaned from Paul Lagarde's works as Mann seems to have been very familiar with Lagarde, whereas Adam Müller is mentioned rarely in the Betrachtungen or in any of Mann's other works.

12

Betrachtungen, p. 41.

13

Friedrich Naumann, Central Europe, intro. by W.J. Ashley, trans. by C. M. Meredith (London: P.S. King & Son Ltd., 1916), p. 67.

14

Betrachtungen, p. 41.

15

G.M. Schwarz, "Deutschland und Westeuropa bei Ernst Troeltsch", Historische Zeitschrift, 191 (1960), p. 532. Troeltsch was very close to maintaining the absolute uniqueness of Germany, but he never made the complete break between Germany and the West. See also: Jakob Wassermann, "Das deutsche Wesen", Die Neue Rundschau, XXVI, 1 (1915), p. 240. This essay presents the same notion of German uniqueness Mann refers to in the Betrachtungen.

16

Leopold von Ranke, "Volk und Staat", in Kleines Deutsches Kulturlesebuch, ed. by Walter Mönch (Heidelberg: F.H. Kerle Verlag, 1959), p. 39.

17

Betrachtungen, p. 67.

18

F.W. Coker, Organismic Theories of the State: Nineteenth Century Interpretations of the State as Organism or as Person, Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, Vol. XXXVIII, 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 62-82. This work is one of the most detailed accounts of the state as personality. See also: G. L. Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), pp. 16-17.

19

This is the whole point of his chapter "Der Protest". See: Mann, Betrachtungen, pp. 34-40.

20

Ibid., p. 240. See also: A. G. Meyer, p.403.

21

Thomas Mann, Friedrich und die große Koalition, pp. 7-8.

22

Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West, trans. by C. F. Atkinson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932), I, 252.

23

Unlike Spengler, Mann was not attempting to construct a philosophy of history, yet in creating the postulates he does concerning the German nation, he has created such a philosophy.

24

Betrachtungen, p. 42.

25

Ibid., p. 42. "...weniger der Widerstand Selbst, als seine Wortlosigkeit und Unartikuliertheit von der Zivilization als 'barbarisch' und haßerregend empfunden wurde".

26

Stefan Grossmann, "Kriegsliteratur", Die Neue Rundschau XXVI (1915), 1133-1137. This article attests to the fact that the Germans did not suffer the war in silence. In the article are reviewed such works as Das Wirkliche Deutschland (1915) and Mann's "Friedrich" essay. Mann's claim that the Germans suffer in silence is nonsense in the light of Germany's voluminous war literature.

27

Betrachtungen, p. 43. "Die literarische Humanität, das Erbe Roms, der klassische Geist, die klassische Vernunft, das generöse Wort, zu dem die generöse Geste gehört, die schöne, herzerhebende und menschenwürdige, die Schönheit und Würde des Menschen feiernde Phrase, die akademische Redekunst zu Ehren des Menschengeschlechtes-- dies ist es, was im römischen Westen das Leben lebenswert, was den Menschen zum Menschen Macht. Es ist der Geist, ihr 'klassisches Modell', jener Geist, der im Jakobiner zur Scholastisch-literarischen Formel, zur mörderischen Doktrin, zur tyrannischen Schulmeister-pedanterie erstarrte."

28

Ibid., p. 43.

29

E. Troeltsch, "Der Geist der deutschen Kultur". in Deutschland und der Weltkrieg, ed. by Otto Hintze,

Friedrich Meinecke, and others (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1915), p. 80. Troeltsch said: "Ihr [German art's] eigentlicher Mittelpunkt ist aus ebendiesem Grunde die Musik, in der sich alles Unausprechliche und Unformbare des deutschen Wesens, Kindlichkeit und Heroismus, Heiterkeit und Melancholie, Glaube und Lebenskampf, Problematik und Intuition in der uns vernehmbarster Weise ausspricht". See also: Thomas Mann, Doctor Faustus, trans. by H. T. Lowe-Porter (London: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 56. In this post-1945 work Mann characterized Kretschmar, the musician-instructor of Adrian Leverkühn, as being a stutterer who could not express himself verbally but could through music. In this sense Kretschmar, as the formative spirit of Dr. Faustus, can be considered a personification of spiritual Germany as Mann saw it.

30

Weigand, p. 113.

31

Ibid., pp. 113-114.

32

Betrachtungen, p. 162.

33

Ibid., p. 165.

34

Weigand, p. 125.

35

Klaus Epstein, The Genesis of German Conservatism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 314-315. To Mann could be applied what Epstein said of Justus Möser: "for Möser beneficent Nature was embodied in those very institutions which had grown up over centuries to serve the needs of man. It was unnatural to wish to sweep them away in the name of an abstract theory which was nothing more than a contrivance of the human mind".

36

Friedrich Meinecke, Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat (4th. ed.; Berlin: Verlag von R. Oldenburg, 1917), p. 89.

37

Fritz Stern, "Rationalismus und Irrationalismus in Deutschland (Arbeitsgruppenbericht)" in Aufklärung heute-- Probleme der deutschen Gesellschaft: Ein Tagungsbericht, ed. by Hermann Glaser (Freiburg: Verlag Rombach, 1967), p. 45. Characterizing the romantic revolt against the enlightenment Stern said: "Die Emotionen der Menschen, nicht ihre Vernunft allien, die Tragik, das Unerklärliche, ja auch das Mysterium des Menschen regte diese Geister [Romantics] an-- und sie

beklagten sich manchmal über die 'seichten' Aufklärer, die den 'grünen Lebensbaum' nicht wahrnahmen".

38

Betrachtungen, p. 186. Mann argued that Germany was the land of conflicting ideas; alluding to the conflict with his brother Heinrich, Mann said that European wars became German "Bruderkriege".

39

Friedrich Meinecke, Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat, 4th. ed., p. 63.

40

Ibid., p. 56.

41

Adam Müller, "Von der Universalität des deutschen Geistes", in Kritische, ästhetische und philosophische Schriften, ed. by Walter Schroeder und Werner Siebert (Kritische Ausgabe; Berlin: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1967), I, p. 44. Müller wrote: "so ist Deutschland da, um die Herrschaft nicht eigensüchtig zu besitzen und zu genießen, sondern um sie auf die Zeitgenossen und die Zukünftigen fortzupflanzen, um als wahre Frau dienend zu herrschen. Alles, was die andern haben, ist nur etwa und bleibend das Ihre, insofern es sich vereinigt mit dem, was Deutschland war, ist und sein wird".

42

Ibid., p. 44.

43

Thomas Mann, Letters to Paul Amann 1915-1952, Nov. 1916, p. 79. Mann wrote: "We the Germans are something like a Europe in the extract. In our soul, in fact in the soul of the individual German, the contradictions of Europe are fought out."

44

Betrachtungen, p. 46.

45

Ibid., p. 199. Rejecting the argument that cosmopolitanism and European harmony can only be gained with an Entente victory, Mann wrote: "Der Friede Europas kann nur beruhen auf dem Siege und der Macht des übernationalen Volkes, des Volks, das die höchsten universalistischen Überlieferungen, die reichste kosmopolitische Begabung, das tiefste Gefühl europäischer Verantwortlichkeit sein eigen nennt". He was, of course, referring to Germany.

46

Ibid., p. 46.

47

Thomas Mann, "Die Rolle der Kultur", in Der Deutsche Liberalismus, ed. by F. Federici (Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1946), p. 420. This passage, written in 1936, maintained "Der Ruhm deutscher Nation bestand immer in einer Freiheit, die das Gegenteil patriotischer Borniertheit ist...." This is again an affirmation of the basic lack of characterization which Mann attributed to Germany.

48

Betrachtungen, p. 50.

49

This again is closely related to Adam Müller's attitude. See: Adam Müller, p. 37. Because of a lack of national or class unity Muller felt Germany had the universal aspect to its culture. This lack of unity makes understandable "daß in Deutschland ein Grad der Universalität in den Ansichten vom Ganzen der Menschheit möglich ist, wie er nie in die nationale Bildung der übrigen europäischen Völker eingehen konnte".

50

Betrachtungen, p. 63.

51

Friedrich Meinecke, Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat, p.20.

52

Guido de Ruggiero, The History of European Liberalism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), p. 212. It is pointed out that because of the constant repetition of German citizenship being one in an ideal community, in a Kulturnation, the German intellectuals throughout the Romantic era ceased to concern themselves with the creation of a Staatsnation.

53

E. Troeltsch, "Der Geist der deutschen Kultur", in Deutschland und der Weltkrieg, ed. by Otto Hintze, Friedrich Meinecke and others (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1915), p. 63. Troeltsch made a similar claim arguing that French civilization was a strange mixture of scepticism and dogmatism ruled by the love of the beautiful "phrase."

54

Erich Kahler, "The Responsibility of the Spirit", p. 444.

55

Betrachtungen, p. 44.

56

Thus, for example, Mann cited the writings of Goethe, Schiller, Fontane, Adam Müller, even Tolstoy and Dostoevsky; yet there are only two composers, one of which is Wagner, the other Pfitzner.

57

Betrachtungen, p. 62.

58

Oswald Spengler, I, p. 216.

59

Betrachtungen, p. 59

60

Ibid., p. 265. In the context of democracy Mann argued that Germany should develop its own institutions, according to its own inner traditions.

61

Dostoievsky, p. 729. This idea comes through clearly; Mann felt that Germany's mission was superior to the hopes and aspirations of other nations.

62

Betrachtungen, p. 235.

CHAPTER III

DEMOCRACY AND THE DECAY OF EUROPE

Like many Germans, Thomas Mann was both astonished and overjoyed as the sound of cannonfire echoed across the Rhine in August of 1914. So many times war had threatened but never materialized; only tensions and more tensions had resulted.¹ Now that Europe was at war at last, the holocaust was greeted as an escape from the petty and empty bourgeois world of the decade preceeding 1914. Rainer Maria Rilke expressed the hope and joy felt by Mann and countless other Germans as the guns began to sound. Writing to a young friend going to war he said:

Now your unsettled plans have been taken off your shoulders by a common destiny--I can imagine that this is an unforgettable joy, thus all at once to be involved in One power and One emotion, especially after the many-minded times that have long since confused and wearied all of us.²

Even while intoxicated with the hope that a new and more heroic world would rise from the ashes of the old, Mann recognized that the German nation and the lives of its people were at stake. He firmly believed that great suffering would result if the holocaust enveloped all of Europe. Still, he concluded that the conflict and the eventual victory of Germany were necessary.³ It was such a conflict which might revitalize a tired Europe and restore to Germany the historic role from which she had deviated. With Jacob Burckhardt, Mann could easily have said:

Crisis and even their accompanying fanaticism are to be regarded as genuine signs of vitality.⁴

Although he was particularly interested in the vitality and rebirth of the German spirit, Mann foresaw a more general effect on Europe. The war would bring an end to those influences which, he felt,

were ruining the humanity of the European nations. The conflict would again bring out the essential European values, and purge the worthless and degrading ones which had arisen in the last century. Anticipating the experiences a man such as Ernst Jünger would gain from his life in the trenches, Mann argued that the war had to increase the intellectual scope of the combatants.⁵ It was a great opportunity for Europe to achieve a greater and improved humanity:

In light of the circumstances, it is not merely the poets' fancy which in the form of a premonition leads him to imagine what spiritual-intellectual, religiously uplifting, spiritually deepening, and ennobling effects the presence of death for years on end can manifest in the nature of man--it is not merely his fancy which brings him to the insight of what mental changes death's presence must bring to light or can bring to light.⁶

This then was the mission of Germany stimulated by the impact of the war. The ennobling and uplifting and deepening of the human soul was to be the job of this nation of professors and philosophers; they were to teach Europeans how to live once more like men. Dostoevsky had commented that the Germans had no gospel.

And even though they did not (never did so far) utter 'their word' or set forth their strictly formulated idea in lieu of the ancient Roman idea, nevertheless, it seems that within themselves, they always were convinced that they were capable of uttering this 'new word' and of leading mankind.⁷

Even Mann cannot describe what the German Gospel, the German "word" is.⁸ But from the Betrachtungen it is apparent that the message must provide a new concept of humanity, one different from the intellectual currents of both East and West. This concept could not be based on a "slavish" adherence to the rationalist doctrine of the enlightenment which preached some ethereal ideal of human happiness, and created the Western idea of freedom. Nor could it be based on the mystical and

communal ideals of Russia.⁹ Mann, like Moeller van den Bruck who also searched for a "third way", was convinced that the striving for a middle road between rationalism and mysticism was the only way Germany could fulfil its mission.¹⁰

This conviction led Mann to a difficult question: was Germany still capable of such a heroic task? The attempt to answer led him to an analysis of the Germany he knew, and a critique of the dehumanizing ways of life, and the mediocrity which he saw in the Germany of his day. In his analysis Mann became more and more convinced that these ills which he discovered would multiply and grow if the Western way of life were to triumph over the German way of life.

Mann painted a portrait of Germany as a protesting nation, the nation of Luther, of small towns and cities, but he realized quickly that this portrait was outdated. Reflecting on his own youth, his life in the ancient Hanseatic city of Lübeck, he recalled a late medieval town, the towers of the city hall, the ancient brick warehouses, the homes of patrician Burgers, and then he asks himself, does this Germany still exist?¹¹

Of course Mann was forced to answer that Germany was no longer the nation of the small medieval town, of the patrician Burger, of the ancient and elegant townhouses. Like France and Britain, it had been affected by the industrial revolution and in place of the cultured patrician Burger the modern middle class citizen dominated the life of Germany.¹² To speak of the existence of the Burger was to speak of days which had long ago disappeared. In a soliloquy, he says:

You speak of times which are past, in any case of 1850 but not of 1900. In between was Bismarck, in between

was the triumph of "Realpolitik", the hardening and solidification of Germany to the Reich; the rationalization of industry, and the mechanization of science, the structuring, cooling, alienating effect, of the outmoded and archaic patriarchal order of society; in between was emancipation and exploitation.¹³

The Betrachtungen then, reveals itself to be more than an attempt to define the spiritual nature of Germany. It represents as well Mann's effort to understand the nature of the vast social and economic transformation of Germany in the twentieth century, and the consequences these changes have had for German culture and moral philosophy. Mann did not wish to cast Twentieth Century Germany in a narrowly confined role, if the ability to act as the protesting nation of Europe had already been lost. It is for this reason that he investigates the essential characteristics of the entire European world, to see its shortcomings and to see if German uniqueness had already given way to the ideology of the West.

Karl Jaspers in the early thirties, and Friedrich Meinecke shortly after World War II, reflecting on the social and cultural condition of Europe, both argued that Western civilization had undergone the most monumental cultural changes in the course of the nineteenth century. They both saw these changes as the result of Europe's population increase which began in the middle eighteenth century, and as a result of the industrialization of the nineteenth century. The fantastic increase in population necessitated new forms of production to supply the masses; industrialism, the practical application of scientific knowledge and rational method, to the field of economic production allowed the sustainment of large masses of people. Thus, both argue the interdependence of industrialization and the appearance of the masses.¹⁴

Jaspers further argued, that the realization of men that their existence depended on keeping industry running, the realization that without industry the demands of the increasing population could not be met, necessitated a political order which stressed co-operation among men. The new political order, in order to suit itself to the demands of the masses and industry had to allow and foster the existence of "independent personalities",

the good will and voluntary co-operation of each in his place being essential to the proper working of the whole. Democracy in one form or another must, therefore, be the political structure of this apparatus. No longer can anyone arbitrarily decide, in accordance with a preconceived plan, what the masses are to do; for popular approval or tolerance is now indispensable.¹⁵

To Jaspers, as to Meinecke, the appearance of democracy and the rise of the masses into the political arena were phenomena created by demographic and economic forces.

Thomas Mann did not see the inter-relation of economic and political forces as clearly. Where Jaspers accounts for changes in the modern world as the logical development of economic demands and technological changes, Mann blames the political idea of democracy. The author of the Betrachtungen does not see the development of democracy as an outcome of either an increase of population, nor due to a change in the means of production. Rather, democracy itself was responsible for all the changes men like Meinecke and Jaspers had attributed to population increase, industrialization, and the increasing order imposed on life.

Mann's essential focus on democracy itself can easily be accounted for when the time in which the Betrachtungen was written is considered. First, though the work was not written as a propaganda piece, it was nevertheless written as a defense of Germany.

When Romain Rolland argued that the French fought for civilization and democracy, Mann quite naturally found himself arguing against it.¹⁶ Second, the problem of democracy had been a prominent issue of debate in pre-War Germany. There were those, such as Heinrich Mann who wanted to see the Reich become a Volksstaat,^{16a} by which they meant an egalitarian democratic Germany; there were those like Thomas Mann himself who felt that Bismarck's introduction of universal suffrage into the Reich in the 1870's¹⁷ had already been too great a concession to modernity. Third, there had been a certain juxtaposition of events which explains why Mann saw democracy at the base of the changes which German culture had undergone. The birth of the Bismarckian Reich heralded not only the beginning of universal suffrage, but also the beginnings and rapid development of Germany's industrial might. Germany changed from a land of sleepy towns and pastoral fields into a countryside spotted with soot-black smokestacks and laced with thousands of miles of railway trackage; within a period of forty years it changed from a pre-industrial to an industrial land. Thus, while one can understand why Mann liked to see democracy as the cause of a number of the phenomena characterizing the modern world, one can see that he is really dealing not solely with the problem of the effects of democracy, but also with the changes resulting from modernization and industrialization.

It must be added that for a man of Mann's nature and temper, a man concerned with moral and intellectual problems, a man who saw culture in such a platonically lofty position; for such a man it was inconceivable that the mere realm of economics could effect the lofty realm of culture. Democracy, based on the philosophy of the enlightenment, seemed a much more suitable and appropriate cause of the tendencies Mann found in European culture. It would, however, be an injustice to contend that Mann

is totally unaware of the effects of industrialization and rationalization. Obviously this is not the case. This is clear from his recognition of the cultural changes ushered in by the development of Germany's economic boom.¹⁸ Yet it must be made clear that Mann, just as he saw little relation between war and economics, so too he saw little relation between economic changes and cultural changes.

Jaspers saw the influence of the masses directly dependent on the rapid increase in population which Europe witnessed, and the growing importance of the masses in terms of industrial production. Jaspers saw them as a demographic phenomena which had profound effects on the cultural life of Europe. Mann recognized full well the profound influence of the mass, but unlike Jaspers, he saw the growth and the power of the masses not in terms of population increases or changes in means of production, rather he viewed this as an outcome of democratic ideology. Yet the influence of the masses is of paramount importance in his criticism of the world as he saw it. It is in fact the basis of his entire criticism of the modern world.

Mann accounted for the rise of the masses by drawing a historical portrait of the rise of enlightenment philosophy. The masses, according to Mann, had come to power through the influence of Rousseau's philosophy preaching the rights of man. Man is virtuous, rational, and therefore capable of ruling himself; this is not restricted to some men but includes all men. Therefore, democracy, universal suffrage, the participation of all in the decision-making process of the state or nation was to Mann inherent in Rousseau's basic belief of the nature of man. From this Mann concluded that the rule of the mass was basically a creation of enlightenment philosophy. This philosophy spread throughout Europe destroying the cultural heritage of thousands of years of civilization

in the West, and reduced the level of cultural life everywhere. It reduced the life of nations to that of "tango republics".¹⁹ It brought with it a constitutionalism full of arid platitudes concerning freedom, liberty, and equality behind which lurked the materialistic and capitalistic ambitions of a deceptive and terribly uncouth middle class of come-latelies.²⁰

It is not strange that Mann saw the phenomenon of the masses and the rise and growth of the middle class as one. Historically this is a most justified observation. Accompanying the industrialization of any country is not only the creation of a huge urbanized working force or mass, but also the appearance of an army of managers, technical experts, and entrepreneurs. Middle class and proletariat are both creations of the same phenomena: industrialization and mechanization.²¹ While Mann's observations were well founded on historical observations, the interpretation which he gives to these events is somewhat questionable. In a somewhat Marxian argument, Mann held that democracy was an essential aspect of middle class ideology designed to ensure the rule of the middle class. It is through democracy that the middle class is able to lead, or more correctly mislead the masses in order to gain its own ends; to increase its own wealth and opulence.²²

The basis of Mann's objection to democracy was twofold: he attacked the theoretical basis of democracy, and claimed further that democracy was being used to increase the wealth and pernicious influence of the bourgeoisie. Like many conservative thinkers of the nineteenth century, notably Jakob Burckhardt, Mann viewed the average man as a greedy egotistical individual. Both Burckhardt and Mann had been given a classical humanist education which taught the Greek idea that man's

basic nature was to be greedy, egotistical, and motivated by animal desires. This education probably influenced their interpretation of the materialism of the masses and the ruling middle class. Covered by the thin veil of modern democratic jargon, the middle class and the masses they lead are basically pursuing their own individual materialistic ends. Obviously such a belief about the motivations of men does not produce a favourable attitude toward democratic government. Mann implied that men who are interested only in themselves should obviously have no part in the governing of the collectivity, and constitutions which guarantee rights and freedoms cannot be taken very seriously if they are established and upheld by greedy, selfish men. What is to stop them from overthrowing these constitutions? Mann argued that the rule of constitutions cannot control the masses because the majority of people are:

...highly egotistical, unjust, irresponsible, deceitful, on top of that even malicious and besides the people are endowed with a very questionable level of intelligence. Out of this, arises the necessity of an absolute authority concentrated in a particular individual, which stands above Right and Law, before which everything must bow, and which is considered to be a being of a higher order.....²³

Yet on such rabble the government of a democracy must rely. Mann argued that the democrats of Europe, unlike Schopenhauer whose words he has paraphrased above, did not realize the need for a neutral and almighty power to stand above the wishes of the egotistical rabble. Rather they practiced what Mann called "Quantum Politik",²⁴ the rule that the majority is right by nature of being the majority, and this is the guiding principle of democracy. Mann called this the contention that "World opinion is Mistress of the World".²⁵ Such a contention, of course, he found unacceptable.

It is this connection between democracy and the notion of the masses, which made Mann critical of democracy and the democratic ideal. To him the majority of the people means the mass and within this mass reigns the atmosphere of the zoo.²⁶ By his metaphor Mann not only implied that the masses lack insight and intelligence, he meant that they behave like animals. At best, Mann's attitude toward the common herd of mankind is that they are only capable of following a politically directionless program, seeking nothing more than their day to day gratification. In The Revolt of the Masses, Ortega y Gasset presented a similar attitude toward the majority of the human population. Speaking of democracy, or government controlled by the masses, he held that such a government:

...exists from hand to mouth, it does not offer itself as a frank solution for the future, it represents no clear announcement of the future, it does not stand out as the beginning of something whose development or evolution is conceivable.²⁷

Government of the masses is propelled by base instincts and needs, not by a lofty ambition to increase the scope of intellect among men. The aimlessness of the masses is a stock label used by all conservative thinkers and behind it is the fear of the masses. The fear that these numberless human beings without face and without the refinements of the more cultured person will destroy a cultural accumulation of centuries. Not through any conscious destructive intent, but precisely because of their lack of conscience, their lack of taste and refinement. There is a feeling expressed in the Betrachtungen that the advent of democracy has resulted in just such a decline in cultural values.

Practical materialism, plutocracy, a preoccupation with the standard of living forms the basic character of democratic epochs....²⁸

It is in fact within this characterization that Mann's basic fear of democracy can be found. The middle class with its monetary and capitalistic tastes form the plutocracy, these in turn seduce the masses into following and being loyal to them with promises of more material goods and comforts. The whole basis of the society is materialistic and the result is pleasure seeking: the middle class in its search for money and power and the masses in their preoccupation with material goods, destroy the search for more lofty cultural and intellectual values. This view of the masses as destroyers of culture Mann shared with Nietzsche, who in Thus Spoke Zarathustra cried:

I have no wish to see the grinning snouts and the thirst of the unclean. They cast their eye into the well: now their revolting smile shines up out of the well....In their hands all fruit grows sweetish and overmellow; their glance makes the fruit tree a prey of the wind and withers its crown.²⁹

Burckhardt who had studied the classical revival of Renaissance Italy, Nietzsche who began his philosophical career with the study of classical Greece, and Mann who viewed himself and Germany as the product of the classical humanist tradition; all these found the greatest threat of the masses to be the destruction of the "fruit tree" of European culture.

Mann's fears were based on three attitudes he held concerning democracy. First, like many European conservatives notably Burke, Mann felt that democracy was synonymous with mob rule.³⁰ Having overthrown the traditional authorities of society, the masses came to power; immediately the fear of the unwashed masses conjured up in Thomas Mann's mind the Jacobin terror.³¹ Terror and destruction he felt was the inevitable end of mass rule or democracy. Thus culture could hardly thrive,

for the tranquility and order it required would be lost and perhaps even the foundation, the cultural tradition of the past, would be destroyed. Second, Mann, like Burckhardt and Nietzsche, saw the tastes of the masses and the new middle class as oriented only toward material possessions.³² They demanded only more goods, more sensual pleasures and more frivolous distractions. From a society dominated and ruled by such a vulgar crowd no spiritual or intellectual striving could be expected. Third, Mann felt that the philosophy of democracy as he heard it expressed at the time was mere dogmatism.³³ Alluding to the democrats preaching of the coming of human equality and liberty he argued that from such utopian dreamers and dogmatic speech-makers no cultural elevation was to be expected. The democrats of the West and their German counterparts were too enchanted with their ideology to strive toward truth, toward an expansion of knowledge. As he says:

What I find revolting is the appearance of the intellectual self-satisfaction which has systematized the world in the name of the democratic idea and thus exists both as the dogmatic possessor of truth, and the truth possessing dogmatic.³⁴

This "holier than thou" attitude Mann attributed to democratic thinkers and democracies as he thought them to exist. Their claim to possession and guardianship over truth he regarded as absurd and simplistic. The view of democrats that only their political doctrine was capable of finding and achieving human happiness to him was a silly claim. To insist that only through democratic government will the individual become free, he found absurd. The worker has no more rights than he can pay for; equality is only the equality with one's peers according to income group. The rights of the individual are respected only so far as it is profitable to do so. Democracies do not even respect

the rights of other nations. Capitalism and imperialism are an intrinsic part of democracy; yet despite the obvious injustices of these systems, democracy still claims to lead humanity toward happier times. Sheer hypocrisy cried Mann! Where was the love of virtue, the lofty humanitarian principles when democratic Italy conquered Libya? What human principles were the British implementing in their exploitation of the Indian sub-continent?³⁵ In Mann's view as well as in Troeltsch's view, the Western ideologues and their German sympathizers shamelessly disguised profitable business ventures with moral phrases, cloaked exploitation with humanitarian rhetoric, and achieved from this a complacent synthesis of utility and virtue.³⁶ Mann condemned the democratic rhetoric of virtue not only for its hypocrisy, but also because he felt it led to a moral blindness. It numbs the consciousness by the creation of myths underneath which ethical problems vibrate with unsolved hysteria. To Mann the democracies had not solved the problems of life, had not given "greater security for man's basic existence";³⁷ rather they created an oversimplified ideology which allowed them to deceive both themselves and others concerning their motivations and themselves.

The idea of the inherent weakness of democracy found echoes in the writings of Walter Rathenau. Freedom, equality, fraternity, have little meaning, the author of Zur Kritik der Zeit pointed out.

An adult German, who has returned to his fatherland from America without means, and who does not avail himself of charity, has only the right to walk on the public ways at normal speed and the right to exercise his franchise for the Reichstag elections. ³⁸

Mann would have heartily agreed with this criticism of democratic regimes,³⁹ but unlike Rathenau, or Meinecke and Jaspers as pointed out earlier, he did not recognize fully that the cause of this development

was not only the ideology of the enlightenment, but also the implementation of scientific equipment, and means of production stemming from the growth of technology in the nineteenth century. While Mann realized the connection between democracy and capitalism, he did not see clearly that the capitalist system is a culprit not only in its craving for more goods, but also in its means of production. The organization of industry, the method of mass production, the general ordering of society for the benefit of industrial organization had created the problems of which Mann speaks. Mann did not realize that it was the simultaneous striving for increased orderliness in production, increased rationality, which created the divergence between ideals and reality. The democrat may preach equality, but industry demands heirarchical ordering; the democrat may preach fraternal love for fellow men, but industry demands that work be done at the pace required by the machine. The hypocrisy Mann speaks of is inherent in the existence of a machine age obsessed with both efficiency and democracy at the same time.

Mann also missed the connection between mass production and imperialism. Democracy preached freedom for the individual and for the nation as well. Yet when economic interest seemed at stake, imperialism was practiced despite ideology. Joseph Schumpeter argued that imperialism and capitalism are not necessarily joined because the energy of the nineteenth century capitalist was completely dedicated to his enterprise; but in this he was rather naïve.⁴⁰ While capitalism does not necessarily lead to imperialism and capitalists were rarely interested in colonies per se, they were interested in building ships, and supplying guns and providing agricultural equipment for these colonies. The Naval clubs in Wilhelmine Germany attest to this phenomena.⁴¹ The hypocrisy

to which Mann referred did indeed exist but his analysis becomes distorted by his continual harking back to democracy. This was his mistake. It can be argued that the enlightenment gave great impetus to the rationalization and mechanization of the world, but equating the philosophy of the enlightenment and democracy, though extremely common in German appraisals of European History, is not correct.⁴² Rationalism and empiricism as developed during the eighteenth century not only gave rise to democratic theory, but also led to scientific developments which resulted in the invention of new technology. The lack of appreciation for the influence of technology on the culture of Europe is the great weakness of the analysis of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in the Betrachtungen.

At the root of Mann's attitude toward the modern world is the unwritten, but nevertheless ever present assumption, that the ends for which man lives, the attitudes and aspects of man's existence which make existence worthwhile are no longer being satisfied by his social and political environment. Mann would have gone even further, he would have argued that humanity was being destroyed by the modern world, and this was due primarily to the fact that the masses had assumed the reins of power. In isolating the masses as the root of Europe's problems, Mann's position closely resembled Ortega y Gasset's who argued that the changes Europe had undergone in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were the result of "the political domination of the masses".⁴³ The Spanish philosopher also felt that the changes had been for the worse.

Mann's arguments to support the contention that Europe had undergone a cultural decline is found in the form of description and comparison. He used as the basis of his comparison an idealization of

Germany prior to the advent of industrialization and Bismarck.⁴⁴ This approach is particularly clear in his statements concerning the destruction between the Burger and bourgeois.

This is a rather interesting distinction because Burger is quite commonly translated into bourgeois, the terms being for most purposes synonymous. Yet Mann viewed the Burger and bourgeois as distinct. To him the Burger was a town dweller of the pre-industrial age who was both a capitalist and merchant, but not a materialist. The Burger restricted his materialistic tendencies through custom and through an ethical outlook which Mann viewed as unique to the Burger. In contrast, the bourgeois was seen as a man of modern times and as totally tied to the search for money and profitable business ventures. The bourgeois is a successful materialist. In making this distinction, Mann was influenced by Werner Sombart's Der Bourgeois which is quoted in the Betrachtungen,⁴⁵ but a less formalized version of the distinction can be found in his first novel Buddenbrooks.⁴⁶ In the novel, the problems of a Burger family attempting to continue its mercantile ventures was told. The problem is basically that the Burger, unable to deny his traditional attitude toward business, succumbs to the modern world's bourgeois manner of doing business.⁴⁷ In the Buddenbrooks, it is not clear where the author's sympathies lie, but in the Betrachtungen Mann obviously tends to see the pre-industrial unhurried world of the Burger as ideal. This world, dominated by ease and comfort, unharrassed by change or undue speed, steeped in tradition and custom, was the image of the world as it should be; a world tied to tradition, a world of comfort, a world in which intellectual contemplation was still possible; a world in which the wheels of industry and the noise of thriving commerce had not yet drowned out the voice of the

scholar, poet, or philosopher; a world in which the political slogans and fanatical ravings of demagogues found no place.⁴⁸

Because of his longing look to the past, Mann's criticism takes two aspects. First, he criticized mass-democracy; second, he regrets the modern world's deviation from a past he considered ideal. These two aspects are not mutually exclusive and in his specific criticisms of the modern world both are to be found.

Mann's discussion of the change in the qualifications of legislators reveals both these aspects. In the Betrachtungen, Mann argued that in the pre-industrial age professions be professionals. They were experts in their field unconcerned with the whims of the masses; their only responsibility was to do their duty correctly. In the modern world this had changed. Reminiscent of Ortega y Gasset's statement that the masses have taken upon themselves tasks previously restricted to
⁴⁹elites, Mann argued that in the modern world everyone considered himself a legislator.

Never before have so many people been so presumptuous as to consider themselves legislators, and see as their task the correction of all the mistakes of the past, the elimination of all the failings of the human intelligence, and the securing of happiness for coming generations.⁵⁰

Mann felt he was living in an age dominated by amateurs; no longer were professional men called upon to make policy decisions but instead parliamentarians, lawyers, and average men held the reins of power. This phenomena he, like many Germans, found regrettable. Mann was basically in agreement with those in Germany who felt the masses, and even their Reichstag representatives were incapable of reaching objective expert conclusions on many issues. Thus for example, the

Reichstag as late as 1903 never discussed foreign policy or military matters pertaining to foreign policy; the handling of these affairs was left in the hands of bureaucrats and imperial officials.⁵¹

Mann's objection to the involvement of parliamentarians and party politicians in the affairs of state was not motivated by class interest. Unlike the nobility, Mann had little to lose if the German government had been changed from an Obrigkeitsstaat to a parliamentary democracy.⁵² Mann's objections to the rule of the masses and their representatives was based on a theoretical position. Mirroring anti-democratic arguments found in Aristophanes, Plato, and more recently⁵³ in the pseudo-philosopher, Spengler, Mann argued that the masses were fundamentally incompetent and therefore could not rule themselves. The masses guided by the illusion of a future full of happiness and bliss were bound to see their dreams explode in their faces. The mass democracies hoped to achieve human happiness through legislation which would order and rationalize life. Mann doubted the ability of the masses either to implement the means toward their goal, and he doubted even more the possibility of their ever realizing their goal. To Mann, only two results could be expected from mass democracy: anarchy, or the⁵⁴ despotism of the state.

It is with the second possibility that Mann concerned himself with most. In contrast to the pre-industrial state, the modern state was much more involved with the individual who finds his place in it. Whereas in the pre-industrial age the state was remote from the individual, and had restricted itself to maintaining public order, collecting taxes, and protecting the citizen from outside foes, Mann felt that the present state, especially the democratic one, had infiltrated all

levels of human activity. The individual, in Mann's view, was no longer safe from the encroachment of the state.

Mann saw this encroachment in two forms. First, the individual was being subjected to new responsibilities by the state. No longer was a man merely a taxpayer, or a citizen; under the democratic regime of the modern state the individual was made responsible for the state; he had to take part in the decision making process of the state. To Mann, who believed in the German tradition of the aloof artist, this was not at all acceptable.⁵⁶ Second, Mann argued, the centralizing tendencies of the state, whether democratic or authoritarian, tended to either destroy or dominate all aspects of the individual's private intellectual and spiritual life. Mann felt that by interfering in the individual's domain, the modern state was destroying a part of human life. In the Betrachtungen he argued that the state should refrain from interfering in the realm of the arts and sciences, those manifestations of man's creative genius because:

The most important aspects of the human intellect: religion, philosophy, art, poetry, and science exist above, outside, and often despite the state.⁵⁷

In his arguments against state influence, Mann was no doubt influenced by such blatant examples of this phenomena in the form of Bismarck's Kulturkampf and the anti-clerical legislation of the Third Republic.⁵⁸ But in the Betrachtungen the arguments against the centralization of power in the state's hands become anti-democratic arguments. Mann felt that the democratic state especially tended toward a consolidation of power and influence in its own hands. This he attributed to the ideology of democracy. Fundamental to this ideology, Mann correctly

argued, is the notion that problems can be solved through political action. Just as Peter Weiss had his Marquis de Sade say that the French Revolution had been caused by men who were unhappy with their fat wife, or their ugly face;⁵⁹ so too Mann argued that the problems of life could not be solved by political action or legislation. Reflecting a pessimism which he gleaned from Schopenhauer, Mann argued that the problems men face in life are eternal; these problems cannot be eliminated they can only be born.⁶⁰ In this context Mann quoted Tolstoy's War and Peace in the Betrachtungen. Within the context of the Napoleonic Wars, Tolstoy pointed out the continuity of life's rhythm despite wars and political activity.

Life meanwhile--real life, with its essential interests of health and sickness, toil and rest, and its intellectual interests in thought, science, poetry, music, love, friendship, hatred and passions--went on as usual, independently of and apart from political friendship or enmity with Napoleon Bonaparte and from the schemes of reconstruction.⁶¹

Implied in Mann's argument is the notion that modern man has become alienated from life itself. The constants of human existence have been hidden by a false and siren-like ideology. Democracy promised freedom, instead it created slaves for the almighty state. It promised freedom, equality, and fraternity, and gives only the baubles produced by an industrial complex. It praised the reason and virtue of man, yet used these only to exploit and justify exploitation of other men.

In the introduction to the Betrachtungen, Mann had said that he wished to come to terms with the twentieth century. He did, but he found this new age wanting.

FOOTNOTES

1

Fritz Stern, The Politics of Cultural Despair, 257. Stern points out the relief felt by Moeller van den Bruck at the coming of the war. See also: Carl E. Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905-1907, The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 291-292. Even the Social Democrats were swept up by the mood of August 4, 1914. Like the other parties, they acceded to the Burgfrieden which they saw as a step out of the isolation they had suffered before the war.

2

Rainer Maria Rilke, Wartime Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke 1914-1921, trans. by M. D. Herter Norton (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1964), letter to Thankmar Freiherr von Münchhausen, August 15, 1914, p. 11. See also: Friedrich Meinecke, "Der Weltkrieg," Die Neue Rundschau, XXV, (November, 1914), 1615. In this article Meinecke said: "Keiner von uns Lebenden wird je die Tage des 31. Juli und 1. August 1914 vergessen, als das Schicksal dröhnend an den Schild schlug." Twenty years later Meinecke remembered the emotion the outbreak of the war had brought forth in his work Die Deutsche Katastrophe (1946). See: Friedrich Meinecke, The German Catastrophe, trans. by Sidney B. Fay (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 25.

3

Betrachtungen, pp. 178-179. Mann describes the moral aspects of the war's outbreak which made him feel as one with Germany, and therefore seek his fatherland's victory. See also: Thomas Mann, Letters to Paul Amann 1915-1952, October 1, 1915, pp. 55-56. Mann affirmed the necessity of a German victory. This letter is of particular interest for two reasons: first, he asked for only a qualified German victory, as he does in the Betrachtungen; second, the letter states the necessity of the payment of reparations to a victorious German. This is a deviation from Mann's attitude in the Betrachtungen in which no mention is made of reparations.

4

J. Burckhardt, Force and Freedom: Reflections on History, ed. by James Hastings Nichols (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 289.

5

Ernst Jünger, Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1936), p. 45. A case of fraternization brought Jünger to say "Zuerst sind wir Menschen, und das verbindet uns. Aber gerade, weil wir Menschen sind, wird immer wieder der Augenblick kommen, wo wir übereinander herfallen müssen."

6

Betrachtungen, p. 452.

7

F. M. Dostoievsky, II, 317. The same passage taken from Dostoievsky's essay "The Germanic World Problem. Germany is a Protesting Country," is found in the Betrachtungen. See: Betrachtungen, pp. 35-36.

8

Betrachtungen, p. 36.

9

This is part of the idea of Germany as the land of the middle, between East and West described in the previous chapter. See: Ludwig Dehio, Germany and World Politics in the Twentieth Century, trans. by Dieter Pevsner (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1967), p. 89. Dehio drew the same distinction. "Our aim was to mark out a third domain of freedom and diversity between the uniformity of Russian bureaucracy and Anglo-Saxon social forms." Dehio applies this idea to colonialism, while Mann used it in the cultural realm.

10

Fritz Stern. The Politics of Cultural Despair, p. 246. Stern felt that Müller was looking for a balance between the West and East.

11

Betrachtungen, p. 129.

12

Ibid.

13

Ibid., pp. 129-130. "Du sprichst von Zeiten, die vergangen sind, von 1950 allenfalls, aber nicht von 1900. Dazwischen war Bismarck, dazwischen war der Triumph der 'Realpolitik', die Härtung und Verhärtung Deutschlands zum 'Reich'; die Verwissenschaftlichung der Industrie und die Industrialisierung der Wissenschaft; die Regelung, Erkältung, Verfeindseligung des unmöglich gewordenen patriarchalischen-menschlichen Verhältnisses Emanzipation und Ausbeutung."

14

Karl Jaspers, Man in the Modern Age, trans. by Eden and Cedar Paul (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1959), p. 39. Speaking of industry Jaspers said: "The broad masses of the population could not exist today but for the titanic interlocking wheelwork of which each worker is one of the cogs." See also: Friedrich Meinecke, The German Catastrophe, p. 2. "The simultaneous industrial revolution was just as successful as the French revolution with its mobilization of the masses, and the awakening of an urge to freedom, power and profits."

15

Karl Jaspers, Man in the Modern Age, pp. 39-40.

16

Romain Rolland, Above the Battle, p. 38. "The armies of the Republic will secure the triumph of democracy in Europe and complete the work of the Convention. We are fighting for more than our hearths and homes, for the awakening of liberty."
See: Betrachtungen, pp. 141-213.

16a

Klaus Epstein, Matthias Erzberger and the Dilemma of German Democracy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 20. The term Volksstaat was popularized by Hugo Preuss to mean a parliamentary democratic regime as opposed to the Obrigkeitsstaat existent in Germany. See: Hugo Preuss, Das Deutsche Volk und die Politik (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1915).

17

Betrachtungen, p. 131.

18

Ibid., pp. 129-132. This phenomena had already been recognized by such men as Lagarde, Langbehn, and the more reputable philosopher Nietzsche. See: Fritz Stern, The Politics of Cultural Despair, p. 18.

19

Betrachtungen, p. 53.

20

Ibid., pp. 131-132. Mann realized that Germany had been "Americanized", but also states that he missed the most blatant manifestations of industrialism and the changes this wrought in Germany.

21

Joseph Schumpeter, Imperialism, Social Classes, intro. by Bert Hoselitz, trans. by Heinz Norden (New York: Meridian Books, 1951), pp. 66-67.

22

Mann, Betrachtungen, pp. 43-44. See also: Wolfgang J. Mommsen, Max Weber und die Deutsche Politik (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959), p. 115. What Mann accused the democratic regimes of the West of, Mommsen sees as being part of Max Weber's criticism of Germany's pre-war social legislation. "Der Fehler aller patriarchalischen Sozialpolitik lag nach seiner [Max Webers] Ansicht darin, daß sie sich in wohlwollender Sorge für die materiellen Belange der Arbeiterschaft bemühte, aber gerade dadurch den deren Botmäßigkeit und Unterordnung zu erhalten oder womöglich zu steigern suchte."

23

Betrachtungen, p. 119. See: Arthur Schopenhauer, On Human Nature, selected and trans. by T. B. Saunders (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1910), p. 18. Mann's position is similar to Schopenhauers. "Man is at bottom a savage, horrible beast. We know it, if only in the business of taming and restraining him which we call civilization."

24

Betrachtungen, p. 263.

25

T. Mann, Briefe 1889-1936, June 1918, p. 145. In this letter to Fritz Enders, Mann expressed the hope that this dictum would never find wide-spread acceptance in Germany. He attributed the slogan to President Wilson of the United States.

26

Betrachtungen, p. 224. This again reflects the Schopenhauerian influence.

27

Jose Ortega y Gasset, The Revolt of the Masses, trans. anonymous (London: Unwin Books, 1969), p. 37.

28

Betrachtungen, p. 353. "Praktischer Materialismus, Plutokratie, Wohlstandsbegeisterung bildet den Grundscharakter demokratischer Epochen."

29

Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), pp. 208-209. See also: J. Burckhardt, Force and Freedom, p. 33. Burckhardt felt that democracy as mass rule could only level and destroy, not create.

30

Betrachtungen, 319. See also: Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, ed. by William B. Todd (3rd. Print.; New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 107.

31

Betrachtungen, p. 43. See also: Klemens von Klemperer, Germany's New Conservatism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 24.

32

J. Burckhardt, pp. 297-298. The historian saw this trend manifested in the fact that the "best minds" were being trained to go into business; Friedrich Nietzsche, pp. 208-211.

33

Betrachtungen, p. 323.

34

Ibid., pp. 322-323. "Was mich empört, ist die Erscheinung des geistigen Satisfait, der sich die Welt im Zeichen des demokratischen Gedankens systematisiert hat und nun als Rechthaber, Rechthabender lebt." See also: Julien Benda, The Treason of the Intellectuals, trans. by Richard Aldington (New York: Norton & Co., 1969), p. 46. Benda, unlike Mann, argued that not only democrats, but all intellectuals argued in a dogmatic spirit. "The modern 'clerk' is determined to have the soul of a citizen and to make vigorous use of it...."

35

Betrachtungen, p. 347.

36

E. Troeltsch, p. 61.

37

Betrachtungen, p. 349. Mann dismissed democracy's claims to give security to man's basic existence rather sarcastically.

38

Walter Rathenau, Zur Kritik der Zeit (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1922), p. 75. "Ein erwachsener Deutscher, der vermögenslos aus Amerika heimkehrt, hat, sofern er sich nicht um Wohltätigkeit bewirbt, nur das Recht sich mit normaler Geschwindigkeit auf öffentlichen Straßen zu bewegen und seine Stimme für die Reichstagswahl abzugeben."

39

Rathenau saw the root of the problem not only in democracy, but in the general phenomena he termed (as did others) the mechanization of the world. Through industry, through the search for more efficient organizational models and forms, man was being reduced to a cog in a gigantic machine. See: Karl Jaspers, The Origin and Goal of History, trans. by Michael Bullock (London: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 96-125. Jaspers gives a concise and readable account of the problems created by modern technology.

40

Joseph Schumpeter, p. 69. The economist Schumpeter argued this position mainly to overcome the dominant Marxist argument that capitalism was at the root of imperialism. In this he was quite successful.

41

The Naval Leagues of Wilhelmine Germany received considerable support from ship building and steel concerns. See: Gerhard

Ritter, Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk: Das Problem des "Militarismus" in Deutschland (2nd rev. ed., Munchen: Verlag R. Oldenbourg, 1965), II, 172.

42

Klemperer, passim. This of course in no way denies the differences E. Troeltsch discerned between the philosophy of Germany and the West.

43

Ortega y Gasset, p. 13.

44

Betrachtungen, p. 106. Mann goes back to the late middle ages for his model which he felt was only destroyed with the advent of modern times. In this harking toward the remote past Mann has much in common with Julius Langbehn who sought his classical model in Rembrandt.

45

Werner Sombart, Der Bourgeois: Zur Geistesgeschichte des modernen Wirtschaftsmenschen. (Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1913), pp. 11-25. See also: Mann, Betrachtungen, p. 137. Mann referred to Sombart's definition of the bourgeois as the synthesis of the "hero, merchant, and Burger". In this reference Mann distinguishes less clearly than he does elsewhere in the Betrachtungen between the Burger and Bourgeois. Sombart in the pages cited above analyzes the differences between the pre-industrial and post-industrial individual which is roughly equivalent to the distinction Mann made.

46

Thomas Mann, Buddenbrooks, trans. by H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Vintage Books, 1968). Buddenbrooks was initially published in 1901.

47

Henry Hatfield, "Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks: The World of the Father," in Thomas Mann, ed. by Henry Hatfield (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1964), p. 14. Hatfield said of the Buddenbrooks: "Mann did not intend to write a symbolic novel of the German middle class, which was rising to new heights of prosperity during the period he describes, but rather to represent the decline of cultivated patricians, pushed to the wall by the new bourgeoisie".

48

Erich Kahler, "The Responsibility of the Spirit," p. 445.

49

Ortega y Gasset, p. 17.

50

Betrachtungen, p. 294. "Neimals haben sich so zahlreiche Menschen eingebil-det, lauter Gesetzgeber zu sein und die Aufgabe zu haben alle Fehler der Vergangenheit zu verbessern, alle Irrtümer des menschlichen Geistes zu beseitigen, das Glück der kommenden Geschlechter zu sichern."

51

Klaus Epstein, Matthias Erzberger, p. 19. Epstein is able to say: "In Germany, especially foreign affairs were rarely discussed in the Reichstag. Successive Chancellors took the attitude that such wieghty matters exceeded the understanding of mere parliamentarians."

52

This is made clear in the Betrachtungen by statements to the effect that the author does not feel tied to Germany's economic interests. See: Betrachtungen, passim.

53

David Spitz, Patterns of Anti-Democratic Thought (Rev. ed.; New York: The Free Press, 1965), pp. 127-128. See also: Oswald Spengler, II, p. 416. Spengler argued that parliamentary democracy was a shallow form of government that could not control the masses; the masses could not control themselves, therefore plutocracies had to rule over them.

54

Mann, Betrachtungen, p. 117.

55

Ibid., p. 141.

56

Ibid., pp. 264-267. Mann felt that politics as such were alien to the German spirit and tradition.

57

Ibid., p. 141.

58

Klaus Epstein, Matthias Erzberger, p. 68. State interference in the affairs of religion were still a great issue in Wilhelmine Germany. As late as 1910 Matthias Erzberger complained of the Reich's interference in matters of religion, and discrimination against Catholics in the Reich's bureaucracy. The religious implications of the Dreyfus affair seem to have been fairly clear to Mann. See: Betrachtungen, pp. 172-173.

59

Peter Weiss, The Persecution and Assasination of Marat as

Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis De Sade, English version by Geoffrey Skelton, verse adaptation by Adrian Mitchell (London: Calder and Boyars Ltd., 1965), pp. 68-69.

60

In this attitude he reflected Schopenhauerian philosophy.

61

Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace, trans. by Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Heritage Press, 1938), I. 557-558. See also: Betrachtungen, 428.

CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICS OF A UTOPIAN REACTIONARY

Mann claimed to be totally unpolitical. His desire to be above the turmoil of politics was largely owing to his fear of the crowd hysteria he felt was inherent in democracy.¹ The disgust with politics which Mann showed is based on the so-called mundanity and vulgarity of politics which appalls the conservative members of an elite, and has led them to a preference for right-wing dictatorships especially in the twentieth century.

Mann, however, became a noted opponent of Fascism and the discrepancy between his earlier and later political views is explained away by the argument that Thomas Mann like the serious artist he was, attacked not democracy or politics in themselves, but a caricature of these.²

A much more cogent argument which might be advanced is that Mann's hatred of Nazism arose from the fact that Nazism involved the very uncontrollable passions and mob activity which Mann had somewhat naively attributed to democracy twenty years earlier.³ He saw in Nazism the very barbarism and inhumanity that he had feared would arise with mass politics, and mass democracy.

Certainly in the Betrachtungen his heroes were in at least two cases also Hitler's heroes: Friedrich Nietzsche, and Richard Wagner.⁴ He used each of these authorities to show that the German nation's highest and best known artists and philosophers were non-political. From Wagner, who as a youth participated in the revolution of 1848 and later repudiated his role in it, Mann took his keynote,⁵ "the Germans are a-political". To Mann, the great composer was a type

of Saul who through a brilliant flash became a German Paul; the failure of the revolution of 1848 converted him from the pharisaic cult of politics to the German a-political principle. Although the music of Wagner conjured up for Mann a vague spiritual essence of Germany's past, it had little influence on the Betrachtungen's political philosophizing.

Despite frequent reference to him, Mann was only vaguely familiar with Nietzsche. This is clear from a wartime letter to Paul Amann in which Mann confessed that he had only leafed through Nietzsche, but not read him systematically. This letter, dated Easter Sunday 1916, was written at a point when the Betrachtungen was approximately one third complete.⁶ Though Mann was only superficially familiar with Nietzsche's own works, he became very familiar with Ernst Bertram's Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie.⁷ This work, however, published in 1918 a few weeks before the Betrachtungen, was of little use to Mann's wartime writings. What Mann valued in Nietzsche was his "romanticism"⁸ -- the possession of which Nietzsche himself expressly disavowed.⁹

It cannot be denied, of course, that both Wagner and Nietzsche influenced the Betrachtungen's view of Germany, and Mann's criticism of the modern age, but neither of these influenced his political thought beyond the basic anti-political attitude itself.

It is from Schopenhauer that Mann received his fundamental political insight and it is the philosophy of Schopenhauer, and Mann's rather good understanding of it, which provides the key to an understanding of Mann's political beliefs. A cursory glance at Mann's attitude toward Schopenhauer indicates the influence of the philosophical pessimist on the novelist. The relation between the two had already been well established in Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks. In this novel the pessimism

of Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Idea consoles Thomas Budden-
 brooks, that Burger out of time and place.¹⁰ In the Betrachtungen
 that same consoling pessimism is used to argue against politics and
 democracy. Just as Schopenhauer had no faith in the ability of man to
 subjugate his violent and malevolent impulses to the dictates of reason,¹¹
 so too Mann denied this possibility. Mann like Schopenhauer believed
 that men can only live in society if the anti-social elements in their
 nature are repressed. Both these attitudes found expression in the
Betrachtungen. Paraphrasing from Schopenhauer's The World as Will and
Idea Mann argued:

One would have to read criminal reports and descriptions of
 anarchistic situations in order to recognize what man
 actually is in the moral sense; and these thousands which
 mingle among themselves before our eyes in peaceful inter-
 course, are to be seen as so many tigers and wolves whose
 jaws are closed by a strong muzzle -- that is, through the
 force of laws and the necessary citizen's code of honor.¹²

It is from the notion that man harbors within himself evil, almost
 animal-like demonic forces, that both Schopenhauer's and Mann's attitude
 toward politics grew. It was in such an atmosphere of distrust that
 anti-democratic sentiment based on hatred and fear of the man in the
 street grew; and it was in such a spirit that Schopenhauer gave his
 opera glasses to an officer directing an assault on a barricade during
 the revolution of 1848 in Leipzig.¹³ Mann also, like Schopenhauer and
 Freud, felt that in man lurked forces which should not be released.¹⁴

While the democrat argued that man is basically rational
 and if free would act rationally, Mann argued that man was basically
 irrational and freedom would merely allow the beast in man to come
 forth. Mann maintained that the realm of man interacting with other
 men must be ruled by constraint; the realm of social and political

interaction must be characterized by repression.¹⁵ Mann's argument, of course, was hardly novel. It finds its immediate origin in Schopenhauer, and had been expressed earlier by numerous philosophers, among them Hobbes.¹⁶

The democrat's view that the social and political realm of man's activity is the realm of freedom was another ideal with which Mann could not agree. In her book The Human Condition, Hannah Arendt traced the notion that "freedom is exclusively located in the political realm"¹⁷ to the Greeks of Plato's time. She found that this notion has become traditional in Western political thought; it does, however, require some explanation. Man requires food, clothing, and housing. He can never be free of these demands. The nature and sophistication of his tools also determines the particular life style of man. But man can exercise choice, he can be free, in the way he socially and politically organizes in his efforts to satisfy his needs. In his life with other men, in his political life, man is free to adopt and evolve new forms of human organization. To understand why Mann took exception to the democratic notion of political freedom resort must be made to Schopenhauer's philosophy.

Schopenhauer insisted that Will and Intellect were irreconcilable principles in the cosmos. By Will, he meant the "cosmic forces", life itself; in life the philosopher saw little but suffering. Intellect, or Spirit, is the antagonist of the Will, it orders, makes understandable, but cannot solve the problems of life, it only makes life bearable "not by producing a better life, but by dissolving it into nothingness".^{17a} To the pessimist, as Schopenhauer was, the use of reason to improve the world would always prove to be a futile effort. Any attempt to rationalize men's

lives through politics or social action would be useless.

Mann saw the world in the dualistic way Schopenhauer did, and this explains the Betrachtungen's rejection of political freedom. The life force, the Will of Schopenhauer was for Mann inscrutable, it could not be probed by the human intelligence. Man -- both as an individual and as a social entity, being part of the Will, part of the total life force -- was, therefore, also unintelligable. The Will, or unintelligable aspect of man, effects man's social and political life precluding its rational analysis and conscious rational action in this sphere. This being so, man could not change his life form, he could not reorganize his life through conscious effort. For life being unintelligable and beyond the power of reason, could not be changed by the conscious rational efforts of man. In this sense, then, Mann rejected the notion of political freedom.¹⁸ Political freedom was for him merely the feeble effort of the intellect to make life bearable by creating the illusion that man did control his own fate.

Though Mann rejected the Western concept of political freedom, he did postulate what may be called metaphysical freedom. In the Betrachtungen he wrote:

Concerning freedom...the case is opposite to the one which was long believed to be true; freedom lies not in the operari but in esse, thus in every day dealings inevitable necessity and determinism rule, but Being is eternally and metaphysically free.¹⁹

Intrinsic in Mann's statement concerning freedom is the idea that not only man's physical needs determine his way of life, not only the surrounding environment molds man, but all man's relations and dealings with the outside world limit the individual. In contrast to the democrat who claimed that man can be free in his dealings with other men, Mann

claimed that even these relations limited the individual. Man in all his dealings necessarily conformed to certain patterns of action which were not of his choosing; they were dictated by his very nature. Mann, along with Schopenhauer, did claim that man could be free in a certain sense: man was free to learn the limits of his freedom through the contemplation of his own behavior. Man could be free by observing the nature and limitations of his personality and by accepting these.²⁰ Therefore man cannot change his social and political life, he can only hope to understand and develop himself within a given context.

The duality which is intrinsic to Schopenhauer's philosophy, the notion that the human condition made political change impossible, found its parallel in Mann's political attitudes. Schopenhauer influenced Mann more than any other philosopher, although it was not until the 1930's that Mann fully expressed the influence that had already been present at the time the Betrachtungen was written.²¹ In the Betrachtungen Mann's debt to Schopenhauer was still veiled, but it clearly surfaced in Mann's political thought in two forms. First, it resulted in his denial of the Western notion of freedom. Second, it formed the basis of his anti-democratic, and a-political outlook.²² The second point requires clarification.

Mann's anti-democratic attitude can be dealt with rather quickly. Just as Schopenhauer maintained that the Will, the cosmic life force, was unchangeable, constant, and unintelligible; so too Mann held that the lives of men could not be made to conform to a rational ideal of government, for their natures are also unintelligible, and not necessarily conformable to a rational ideal. To attempt to implement democracy Mann considered sheer folly. Just as great a folly was political

activity. Politics which aims at the improvement of life was merely use-
less activity, for as Mann the student of Schopenhauer knew, life cannot
be changed--it can only be accepted.²³

It is not accidental that Mann's attitudes are so dependent on
the philosophy of Schopenhauer, for one of the major portions of
The World as Will and Idea is dedicated to aesthetics: an aesthetics
suited to the artist as observer and recorder.²⁴ This is the role which
Mann accepted for the artist. He was not the revolutionary who would
change the world, instead he saw himself as the contemplative observer.
The artist in Mann's view was a representative of the spirit, of the Idea.
Life was only considered as the object of his contemplation. It is in
this spirit of contemplation and observation that Mann remained true to
what Gordon Craig called:

...the well known Innerlichkeit that regarded the external
world and its works as being of no legitimate concern to
the artist and that made aesthetic contemplation and in-
tellectual activity ends in themselves.²⁵

Schopenhauer's philosophy and aesthetics deeply influenced
Mann's attacks against democracy and politics, but also formed the basis
of his own political position which he at one point in the Betrachtungen
termed "Aesthetic Politics".²⁶ In order to fully understand his concept
of politics and its positive implications resort must again be made to
Schopenhauer's dualistic philosophy which Mann made his own. This in-
volves again the duality which was discussed previously: the dichotomy
between life and spirit, or Will and Idea.

In one of the most significant passages of the Betrachtungen
Mann maintained that the constant rationalization of man's political
and social life as it was practiced by democrats would eventually lead

to the destruction of man's so called integrated life style. Quoting from one of George Bizet's letters, Mann wrote:

...the total future belongs to the perfection of our social contract. In the perfect society there will be no injustices, and it follows no dissatisfied people; and no more attacks on the social contract, no priests, no gendarmes, no criminals, no divorces, no prostitution, no violent outbursts, no Legion of Honor, no press,...no illusions. ²⁷

The quotation ends with the warning that constant rationalization, the attempt to fit the lives of men into a rational order destroys the life of man. Mann's contemporary the philosopher Rudolf Eucken identified the same problem, although his solution was a revival of religious faith. ²⁸ Both Eucken and Mann felt that a rationalized world might satisfy man's thirst for material satisfaction, for security, for order; but it could not satisfy man's need for adventure, for love, or for mystical experience. ²⁹ It was Mann's wish to outline a political system which could satisfy both the rational and irrational aspects of man.

It is thus not surprising that he discussed man in relation to both the irrational, or Will; and to the rational, the Idea. Schopenhauer's duality is clearly seen in Mann's thoughts in connection with the Betrachtungen's attitude toward the state, and the Burger.

Mann's notion of the Burger was in many ways his concept ³⁰ of himself, and it also has significance in his social thought. In the Betrachtungen he wrote of the Burger as a historically developed, evolutionary creation of a particular ethos. He wrote:

It is not merely coincidence that in looking for the image of the Burger spirit, the cultural Burger type, there appears before me a medieval Nurnberger visage.... Was it not thus: the age of the Burger in our history, which followed the religious and feudal period, was the age of the Hanseatic towns, the age of the cities, it ³¹ was a purely cultural period, not a political one....

Unlike the life style of the modern democratic bourgeoisie, which Mann considered contrived and artificial, the Burger's culture was seen as a product of tradition and long historical development. The contrast between the life style of the Burger and the social order attributed to the modern democratic age, is very similar to the contrast which the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies saw between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft:

Gemeinschaft should be understood as a living organism, Gesellschaft as a mechanical aggregate and artifact.³²

The characteristics Mann ascribed to the life style of the Burger parallel Tönnies' definition of Gemeinschaft. One of the characteristics of a Gemeinschaft is that it is tied together by associations of "kinship".³³ Mann presented the Burger's culture as patriarchal in nature.³⁴ To Mann the concept of Burger did not mean "citizen" but individuals who were bound together by emotional and customary ties usually attributed only to a small family unit. The Burgers, though not necessarily related by blood, are kin due to their mutual interdependence and the patriarchal structure of their community.

Like Tönnies in the case of Gemeinschaft, so too Mann in his discussion of the Burger community, felt that the Burger was not only tied to his fellows by physical neighborhood in a particular area;³⁵ Burgers were tied together by their attitudes, by a common spiritual heritage, and by a common set of beliefs. Mann himself expressed these beliefs in a speech in 1945. In this address entitled "Deutschland und die Deutschen" he described the ancient Hanseatic town of Lübeck:

In the atmosphere itself something of the constitution of the human temperament remained suspended--let us say of the last decades of the fifteenth century, of the hysteria of the departing middle ages, something of a latent spiritual epidemic. It is surprising to say this of a common-sensical

clear-headed modern trading city, but one could imagine that suddenly a children's crusade, a Saint Vitus dance, a miracle of the cross with mystical processions would break out--put bluntly, an ancient neurotic substratum was felt to be lurking.³⁶

The emphasis Mann placed on the atmosphere of the past in the present in which the Burger lived, his ties of kinship, place, and the importance of town life become part of a central concept when considered in light of Mann's Schopenhauerian dualism. The Burger (to Mann) was a phenomenon based on historical development, he was an expression of the Schopenhauerian Will, which meant a manifestation of life itself. Further, the ties of kinship and their penetration into men's lives, the instinctive and natural basis of these ties and their psychological foundation, and the satisfaction of the basic human need for other men and cooperation with other men, were all present in the Burger's form of life.³⁷ The Burger's culture was natural, and even primitive; and because it was primitive and instinctual, it satisfied that part of man which Schopenhauer termed Will. The culture of the Burger was designed to satisfy the instinctual, psychological, and physical forces in man's life.

Schopenhauer might well have debated Mann's attitude toward the Burger for in effect, Mann turned the pessimism of Schopenhauer into an optimism. Schopenhauer considered the Will, and its vitality as basically inscrutable, as being the Kantian "thing in itself" of which the mind could really know nothing.³⁸ Mann took Schopenhauer's philosophy and by rejecting the notion of the unknowable, and by adding the idea of the irrational, created a more satisfying Weltanschauung. The life of man is irrational, and incomprehensible to reason, but reason is not necessary; and natural and historical development was the notion which permeated Mann's idea of the Burger.

The image of the Burger also follows the Schopenhauer's concept of man as "Idea", for the concept of the Burger also included the notion of self fulfillment. Just as Schopenhauer felt that the individual cannot make of himself something other than he is, Mann too argued that the Burger fulfils himself not by creating a different, a more rational life form, but by fulfilling himself through his own constant way of life. It is in this context that Mann held that the Burger is unpolitical. He is uninterested in political or social change, for he recognizes that life is constant, unchangeable, and is ruled by the constant. Quoting from George Lukacs, Mann argued that:

Life is ruled by that which systematically repeats itself, through that which dutifully recurs, through that which must be done without concern for desire or lack of desire. In other words, the rule or order over impulse, the lasting over the momentary, of regular work over creative outbursts, which is enjoyed by sensationalism. ³⁹

How does the Burger, fascinated by the constancy of life, fulfil himself? Mann held that he achieved this through acceptance of his role as a Burger with its set duties and by developing himself to the full within his given place in society. Thus, for example, Mann preached the virtue of duty rather humorously by describing a streetcar conductor who in his uniform carried out his tasks in a dutiful, almost military fashion, despite the seeming insignificance of his task. Mann specifically contrasted him with a "streetcar politician" who ranted and raved about politics. To Mann the former case shows true virtuous activity, while the latter is mere useless activity and folly. ⁴⁰

This notion of "duty" is significant in as much as it presupposes a stable society. The individual member is not asked to change himself or society, he is asked only to develop himself.

In this sense, the individual Burger fulfils the concept of the "Idea". That is, he comprehends his place and recognizes the limitations which he must face.

It is the notion of duty and work together which form the foundation of the liberty of the Burger. Mann in no way holds that the Burger is free in a social or political sense.⁴¹ The society he postulated in the Betrachtungen is structured and it seems immutable. Freedom as Mann well knew from the study of Schopenhauer's philosophy exists in the realm of acceptance and reflection.⁴²

Given the structural rigidity of Mann's Burger culture, self-development or the development of freedom must take place within the structure. Thus, the streetcar conductor develops himself by becoming the best possible conductor, by fulfilling himself in that role in which he finds himself. On a more lofty plain, according to Mann, the artist does the same thing. He fulfils himself, his life and being, by attempting to become a perfect artist. In this connection Mann wrote that work was not the point of life, but the expression of the totality of life, in an aesthetic sense:

It is not life which is the means toward the attainment of an aesthetic perfect ideal, rather work in an ethical life-symbol. Not any objective utopia is the ideal, rather the subjective awareness that "I could not have done any better in any case". If this inner essence can be of objective aesthetic worth to receptive individuals, such as my Viennese patron, then its subjective meaning is ethical throughout.⁴³

What Mann did in placing the sphere of self development in the individual, was to place freedom in the individual. Freedom becomes the ability to develop oneself, not the opportunity to change society nor to change one's place in that society. The implications of this show

Mann's considerable insight. What he did was negate the idea that freedom is only to be found in the political social realm, and thus he negated politics itself, thus too he laid the foundation of his claim to be unpolitical. For politics, as defined in the classical sense, demands that the social, the realm of the polis and its activity be the realm in which freedom be achieved.⁴⁴ In the Betrachtungen the development of the individual, the development of freedom, is not in the realm of the social, it is within the confines of the individual's own sphere of activity and consciousness.

The twofold concept of the Burger contained in Schopenhauer's Will and Idea, can also be found in Thomas Mann's statements concerning the state. Mann held that in democratic ideology, the state as the sphere of political activity, promised to alleviate all the ills of mankind. But just as he did in the social realm, Mann denied the ability of a mechanistic structure such as the state, to achieve this end in the political realm. In the Betrachtungen he expressed profound dislike of Hegel, for in Hegel he found the apostle of those who claimed that man's highest development was expressed through and in the state.⁴⁵ Again Mann felt that the state, just as politics itself, could not command the allegiance of the whole man, for the simple reason that both were "a subordinate because impersonal sphere".⁴⁶ Mann felt that the state was not an institution toward which men could feel a personal attachment.⁴⁷ From this grew the political attitude Mann expressed in the Betrachtungen.

In order to conform to his twofold conception of man, Mann reformulated the definition of the state considerably. He challenged those who would claim that the state could express the interests and needs of all men, and could organize them in such a way as to satisfy these needs.⁴⁸

Mann viewed the democratic state as a mere organization and therefore inadequate for solving the problems of men. The state as an organization aims at rationalization and efficiency, and thus it excludes aspects of man's nature which are not susceptible to reason--basically the irrational or Will aspect of man's existence. As a result, he had to introduce another factor to serve in the governing of men. The factor Mann focused on was the Volk.

In those parts of the Betrachtungen concerned with Zeitkritik Mann already mentioned the inability of the state as such to satisfy man's needs, therefore in line with the thinking of such men as William von Humboldt and more notoriously Paul Lagarde, Mann argued that the state should restrict itself to the least possible activity. Mann saw the useful function of the state in its role as a bureaucracy or mechanism which would ensure the domestic and foreign peace of the people entrusted to it. Mann held that the modern state in itself had no distinctive personality, no ideals, nor virtues in itself. As he said:

In truth, our modern state is not particularly worthy of honor. Egalitarian, tolerant as it is, it no longer advocates a particular World view, instead it represents for better or worse a mediator among the various class interests. A consensus of political opinion and to use a more broad term--religious life is not attainable,--and what meaning would the complete loss of the state's personality have? ⁴⁹

The answer Mann gave was that the loss of the state's personality resulted in a severing of the moral and cultural ties of its people. Mann viewed this with regret, and his politics were designed to compensate for the neutral image of the modern state.

He suggested the Volk as both the source and basis of legislation and authority. To the notion of the Volk, Mann attributed, as did

many other nineteenth century Germans, a personality of its own. In the case of Mann, this can be explained from two viewpoints. First the notion of the Volk allowed him to oppose democracy and the masses which were its basis; second, it allowed him to posit the source of legislation and authority on a foundation which unlike either the State or masses, had a personality of its own. The Volk to Mann was a spiritual, eternal entity, and it was on this institution that he based his politics.

The Volk in terms of the duality discussed earlier, corresponds to the Will, to the continuity of life and its forces. Consider the following passage in the Betrachtungen:

One could object, that the humanly-fallible present accidental generation is at the same time the representative of the lofty ideal community: it is difficult in times like these to divorce the temporary present Volk from the eternal one...the living generation must fight toward the goals of the eternal Volk, and if it is not worthy of this task, then the earlier generations were not worthy either. ⁵¹

Mann seemed to imply that the Volk was a species in a Darwinian sense, which must strive by its nature to continue to survive, to live. Also included, however, is the notion that the Volk is the bearer of eternal values unique to it. It is the combination of these two elements which give the Volk personality and make it the bearer of values for Mann.

Borrowing heavily from Lagarde,⁵² Mann considered the Volk to be both the force which could weld people together in a common bond, and the force which could inspire legislation. The Volk as a metaphysical entity, as an organic totality would thus inspire laws which could satisfy men not only in rational terms but could satisfy their total being. At this point a synthesis of Volk and State can be shown.

The Volk enabled Mann to include in his politics the notion of

belonging to a national community, and for the individual man, a feeling of belonging to a whole; the Volk was in Mann's view the protector and source of the common values. The state was the concrete agency which could carry out these in a rational efficient manner. The state, then corresponds to the Idea, it is merely the agency which develops and maintains the values and ideas of the natural phenomenon, the Volk.

This notion has some democratic implications in as much as the Volk as people is the source and font of legislative authority. This implication Mann shared with Lagarde, from whom Mann inherited the Volkish stream of thought in the Betrachtungen.⁵³ But the Volk does not express itself through a parliament elected by the people. Quoting directly from Lagarde, Mann held:

The Volk does not speak at all when the individual persons comprising it speak. The Volk speaks only if the Volkheit comes to the lips of the individuals: that means when the consciousness of a common background and origin awakens in the many individuals and they resolve their relationships towards the great events of history....With regard to individual laws and particular administrative regulations, the Volk remains totally dumb, even if one asks it man by man.⁵⁴

This statement demonstrates well that Mann felt that the Volk was the font of values, and therefore the inspiration of legislation, but not the drafter, nor enforcer of such legislation; that role was the prerogative of the State.

There is some doubt as to how Mann saw the Volk communicating its will. In the Betrachtungen he suggests a number of possibilities. Because of the Volk's feature of being a national Gemeinschaft and a tribal grouping of sorts, there can be no doubt that the Volk communicated its will to the individual members in unconscious ways, thus eliminating the need for much external coercion and legislation. Of Mann's concept of the Volk, could be said what Ernst Kahler said of the tribal group:

It is very important to realize that all archaic groups act upon the individual from within, through unconscious channels; if not in quite the primitive way of immediate action...they influence the individual through archtypes, ritual, traditions, constitutional habits or tastes. In this way archaic groups are embedded, indeed embodies, in the very individuality of the individual.⁵⁵

Fortunately Mann was realistic enough to realize that this unconscious form of control while eliminating the need for State control in some realms of human activity, did not eliminate it entirely. Therefore he presented two ways in which the synthesis of the individual with the Volk could be carried out.

The first is the idea of the Great Man: the man who knows the needs of the Volk and its desires became the synthesis between State and Volk. This, as Fritz Stern correctly pointed out, was part of a general anti-parliamentary mood pervasive in early twentieth century Germany,⁵⁶ and it is therefore not surprising when Mann argued:

Only under a Führer who bears the characteristics of the traditional Great German, will Volksstaat carry an acceptable image and distinguish itself from humbug-democracy.⁵⁷

The trilogy of Volk, Staat and Führer in the Betrachtungen shows Mann to be an adherent of the Volkish ideas, especially those of Paul Lagarde who deeply influenced Mann.⁵⁸ This aspect has largely been ignored, possibly in an effort to keep Mann clear of tinges of pre-Nazi thought, but also with some justice since the Führer idea is only one of two possibilities Mann presented as uniting Volk and Staat.

The second possibility expressed in the Betrachtungen and the one more often considered by commentators on Mann, is the one Ernst Keller presented in his Der unpolitische Deutsche.⁵⁹ Keller correctly pointed out that Mann attempted in the Betrachtungen to synthesize Volk

and Staat, and that he proposed such a synthesis in the form of monarchy:

I want monarchy, I want a sympathetic independent government, because only it guarantees the possibility of political freedom in the intellectual as well as economic sense. I long for monarchy, because it is the independence of monarchical government from the influence of capitalistic interests which enabled Germany to assume the lead in the field of social politics.⁶⁰

Somewhat reminiscent of Bismark's politics,⁶¹ and the general conservative myth of government, Mann felt that only a monarchy could ensure "objectivity, order, and propriety" and he felt only a monarchy standing above class and social interests could ensure these. For only an institution above and beyond the masses could both command their respect and at the same time deal with all justly. In these ideas Mann was true to Schopenhauer's defense of monarchy.⁶²

Attached to this monarchical idea, Mann also saw a semi-parliamentary system. The masses obviously cannot be trusted, but in Mann's view an even more restrictive Prussian style voting system would not be incompatible with monarchy. Mann suggested a restricted and preferential voting system in which certain classes of citizens would receive voting privileges, and others not. Mann's argument, like that of Ernst Troeltsch, was that the German nation suffered from too many classes, and intellectual and religious barriers to make a universal suffrage election worthwhile or desirable. Instead he suggested a suffrage law:

...which considers, income, age, level of education, intellectual accomplishment, and also takes into consideration if one has sons and therefore has not only an egotistical interest in the state, but takes a broader view--that such a suffrage law could be relatively more just than the universal one is without doubt: and after all, in all problems of human law, the concern can only be with relative justice.⁶³

Mann denied allegiance to both mass democracy and the Wilhelmine Obrikeitsstaat, for his proposal goes beyond the restrictions of the Prussian three-class-system which was based on voting power according to income.

The government form Mann suggested in the Betrachtungen is basically a reactionary one. It included a number of highly conservative elements. His arguments in favor of the monarchy include the notion not only that monarchy is a form of government decreed by nature, but also that it is objective; only it stands above class and party interests. Mann, in concert with many of his contemporaries, felt that monarchical governments and their bureaucracies could assure a government that could satisfy all, because it transcended those over which it ruled.⁶⁴ It never entered his mind that monarchy and bureaucracy might have directions of their own and interests which diverged from the interests of those over which they ruled.

At the same time as he tried to create a notion of the objective State, a sort of "Nächtwächterstaat" according to the tradition of Wilhelm von Humboldt,⁶⁵ Mann also included elements in his notion of the state which directly countered the state's supra-party and supra-class interest and nature. This can already be detected in his comments on the monarchy. The monarch is not only the just ruler, but also the father, the protector of his people. He is a father image, and as such it is questionable how objective his government can be. The patriarchal element in Mann's suggested suffrage law is self evident. The Volk, of course, and the concept of the Führer complicate the problem even more. The Volkish ideas are the source of the state's legislative actions, thus again the state is not objective, but only an administrator of the Volk's ideas and attitudes.

By resorting to the duality of Schopenhauer, Mann attempted to satisfy man's need for belonging. He succeeded all too well. The Volk, the Führer, and the social system of the Bürger, all point to the notion of belonging. However, the idea that government should be objective, that it should be a mere mechanism to carry out the will of the Volk led to the collapse of Mann's entire political system. Whereas he attempted to keep the duality of Volk and state intact so that government could be objective, he had without realizing it made the state not an objective entity, but an extension of the Volk, and as such the partisan tool by which the Volk enforced its will on all. The state's objectivity is impossible in Mann's system.

Without realizing it, Mann made the state more than the defender of the Volk from external enemies, and the custodian of order within.⁶⁶ He maintained Schopenhauer's duality, in as much as the state is the rational expression of the Will of the Volk, but at the same time defeated his own aim of keeping the individual free of the state, a feature which he himself longed for.

In his desire to create a political system which would give man a sense of belonging, he created a system which indeed achieved this aim. But he also felt that the individual or Bürger should be able to develop himself according to his inner dictates, according to his own Idea. This Mann failed in doing, for unless the desire of the Bürger for his own development, and the desire of the Volk coincided, even development of oneself within one's own sphere would be impossible.

The political notions of Mann created a system which by denying the element of political freedom, denied even the element of individual freedom, for the individual was free to develop only insofar as he

belonged, inasmuch as he was one with the Volk. It is this realization which perhaps caused Mann the great qualms of conscience in the pre-war Nazi era when he wondered how much he had contributed to the birth and growth of Nazism.

FOOTNOTES

- 1
Erich Heller, The Ironic German: A Study of Thomas Mann (London: Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1958), p. 130.
- 2
Kurt Sontheimer, pp. 47-48. See also: Andre Banuls, Thomas Mann und sein Bruder Heinrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1968), p. 85. Banuls characterized Sontheimer's thesis as follows: "Sontheimer, der die Betrachtungen sinnvoll kommentiert, sagt, daß Thomas Mann gegen eine Karikatur der Demokratie, nicht gegen die Demokratie selbst ankämpft...."
- 3
Thomas Mann, Deutsche Ansprache: Ein Apell an die Vernunft (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1930) p. 17. In this speech delivered on October 17, 1930 in the Beethoven-Saal in Berlin, Mann said of National Socialism that it contained elements of the "Riesenwelle exzentrischer Barbare und primitiv massen-demokratischer marktsroheit, die über die Welt geht...."
- 4
Ernst Keller, p. 170. Keller pointed out that Nietzsche is mentioned 168 times, Schopenhauer 91 times, and Wagner 84 times. My own reading of the Betrachtungen confirms the accuracy of these findings.
- 5
Ibid., p. 78. See also: Betrachtungen, pp. 75, 113, 123.
- 6
T. Mann, Letters to Paul Amann, p. 69.
- 7
Thomas Mann, Thomas Mann an Ernst Bertram: Briefe aus den Jahren 1910-1955, hrsg. von Inge Jens (Pfullingen: Verlag Günter Neske, 1960), p. 77. Mann praised Bertram's work highly, and compared its literary style and form to the Betrachtungen.
- 8
Walter Kaufmann, p. 15.
- 9
Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nietzsche contra Wagner," in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. by W. Kaufmann (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), pp. 672-673.
- 10
Thomas Mann, Buddenbrooks, trans. by H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), pp. 510-513.

The old Senator Buddenbrooks is described as becoming intoxicated with the "sweet" pessimism of Schopenhauer; through Schopenhauer he at last saw that his life, divided between vitality and spirit, was life itself.

11

Arthur Schopenhauer, "Human Nature", in Essays from the Parargia and Paralipomena, trans. by T. B. Saunders (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1951), p. 17.

12

Betrachtungen, p. 243. See also: Arthur Schopenhauer "Human Nature", in Essays, p. 17. The exact source of Mann's paraphrase is difficult to ascertain, though he himself claimed it was from The World as Will and Idea. A parallel passage to the one found in the Betrachtungen is, however, in Schopenhauer's Essays. After describing various atrocities men had committed in his time, Schopenhauer wrote: "Details of this man's character belong, indeed, to the blackest pages in the Criminal Records of humanity."

13

Frederick Copleston, S. J., Arthur Schopenhauer: Philosopher of Pessimism, The Bellarmine Series, Vol. XI (Andover: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1946), p. 38.

14

Betrachtungen, p. 244. See also: Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1962), pp. 60-71.

15

Betrachtungen, pp. 248-249.

16

Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. by Michael Oakeshott, intro. by Richard S. Peters (London: Macmillan Ltd., 1969), p. 100.

17

Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), p. 29.

17a

Hans Eichner, p. 5.

18

Arthur Schopenhauer, "On the Wisdom of Life: Aphorisms," in Essays, p. 64. Schopenhauer said: "It is the greatest of all inconsistencies to wish to be other than we are."

19

Betrachtungen, p. 124.

20

Patrick Gardiner, Schopenhauer (Baltimore: Penguin Books Ltd., 1963), p. 257.

21

T. Mann, "Schopenhauer," in Essays of Three Decades, trans. by H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1947), p. 380. The essay "Schopenhauer" was written in 1938.

22

Ibid., p. 399.

23

Arthur Schopenhauer, "Counsels and Maxims," in Essays, p. 16. In this context Schopenhauer argued: "They [men] recognize that the fruit of life is experience, and not happiness, they become accustomed and content to exchange hope for insight; and, in the end, they can say, with Petrarch, that all they care for is to learn."

24

Thomas Mann, "Schopenhauer," in Essays of Three Decades, pp. 373-374. Mann said: "The philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer has always been regarded as pre-eminently creative, as an artist-philosophy par excellence. Not because it is so markedly or so extensively a philosophy of art -- actually its aesthetics occupies somewhat more than a quarter of the whole work. Nor yet because its style is so perfectly, consistently clear, so rounded, its presentation and language so powerful, so elegant, ..., so magnificently and blithely severe-- like never any other in the history of German philosophy. All this is only "phenomenal"; it is merely the inevitable and inborn beauty of form expressed in the essence, the inner nature of this kind of thinking, an emotional, breath-taking nature, playing between violent contrasts, between instinct and mind, passion and redemption -- in short, a dynamic artist-nature, which cannot reveal itself in any other way than as the personal creation of truth, convincing by virtue of its having been lived and suffered."

25

Gordon A. Craig, "Engagement and Neutrality in Weimar Germany," Journal of Contemporary History, V (1967), p. 49.

26

Betrachtungen, pp. 529-559.

27

Ibid., p. 62.

28

Rudolf Eucken, "Back to Religion," in Great Nobel Prize Winners, ed. by Leo Hamalieu and Edmond L. Volpe. (New York: The Noonday Press, 1960), p. 145. See also: Rudolf Eucken, Erkennen und Leben (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1923), p. 119.

29

Betrachtungen, p. 161.

30

Georg Lukacs, "In Search of the Bourgeois Mann," in Essays on Thomas Mann, trans. by Stanley Mitchell (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965), p. 14. Lukacs felt that the Burger as ideal was the guiding principle of Thomas Mann's "life and work."

31

Betrachtungen, p. 106.

32

Ferdinand Tönnies, p. 35.

33

Ibid., pp. 42-43.

34

Betrachtungen, p. 119. The patriarchal society of the Burger, and Mann's allegiance to this societal form is present throughout Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks. See: Henry Hatfield, "Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks: The World of the Father," p. 15.

35

Ferdinand Tönnies, p. 43.

36

Thomas Mann, "Deutschland und die Deutschen," in Gesammelte Werke, XII, 558. This element of the past in the present is also found in the Betrachtungen. See: Betrachtungen, p. 107. Karl Mannheim, discussing conservative ideology called this element "an imaginary third dimension which it derives from the fact that the past is virtually present." See: Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, trans. by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (New York: Harcourt Brace and World Inc., 1936), p. 236.

37

In Thomas Mann's novel Buddenbrooks the Burger's life is not satisfying because these elemental needs, and the needs of the spirit cannot be reconciled; this Mann remedied in his Betrachtungen.

38

Mann clearly understood the notion of the Will and its association with the Kantian "thing in itself." This is attested to by his essay "Schopenhauer." See: Thomas Mann, "Schopenhauer," in Essays of Three Decades, p. 378.

39

Betrachtungen, p. 95. The exact page of Soul and Form from which Mann quoted this passage is not available to the author of this thesis at the present time; that the quote came from Lukacs' book is clear as the Hungarian critic himself admits in the "Foreword" to Essays on Thomas Mann. See: Georg Lukacs, Essays on Thomas Mann, p. 10.

40

Betrachtungen, p. 105.

41

Thomas Mann, "Goethe as Representative of the Bourgeois Age," in Essays of Three Decades, p. 84. Mann described the almost deterministic attitude of the Burger toward his life with reference to Goethe. Goethe as Burger, according to Mann, possessed the attitude that one does not create or strive for happiness or freedom but is fated or not fated to be free. "That is the bourgeois sense of security, the psychology of the aristocratic consciousness, that one can never, under any circumstances, be other than privileged and favoured."

42

Thomas Mann, "Schopenhauer," in Essays of Three Decades, pp. 386-387.

43

Betrachtungen, p. 95.

44

Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, pp. 30-31.

45

Betrachtungen, p. 128. See also: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, The Philosophy of Right, trans. by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), pp. 270-271.

46

Harry Pross, "On Thomas Mann's Political Career," Journal of Contemporary History, 5 (1967), p. 70.

47

Betrachtungen, p. 128. In this context Mann said that the German Burger would never believe that "der Staat Zweck und Sinn des menschlichen Dasein sei, daB die Bestimmung des Menschen im Staate aufgehe, und daB Politik menschlicher mache."

48

Ibid., p. 317. Mann argued that the heritage of the enlightenment which under the guise of democracy made such claims would reap the harvest of its own folly. The masses which democracy was raising to new heights would only become "malkontenter, dümmen, und irreligiöser werden." See also: Rudolf Eucken, Erkennen und Leben, p. 6. Eucken, in a similar though milder mood, said: "Heute wäre zu sagen, daß wir in aller Fülle des Lebens rechtes Leben vermissen...."

49

Betrachtungen, p. 241.

50

George L. Mosse, pp. 17-22.

51

Betrachtungen, p. 148.

52

Lagarde is quoted 13 times throughout the Betrachtungen. See: Ernst Keller, p. 170.

53

Betrachtungen, p. 267. Mann called Lagarde the "praeceptor Germaniae."

54

Paul de Lagarde, Deutscher Glaube, Deutsches Vaterland, Deutsche Bildung; ausgewählt und eingeleitet von Friedrich Daab (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1919), p. 142. See also: Betrachtungen, p. 143.

55

Erich Kerhler, The Tower and the Abyss.

56

Fritz Stern, The Politics of Cultural Despair, p. 354.

57

Betrachtungen, p. 358.

58

Fritz Stern, The Politics of Cultural Despair, p. 118. Stern pointed out the high regard Mann had for Lagarde.

59

Ernst Keller, p. 52.

60

Betrachtungen, p. 253.

61

Otto Becker, Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung, ed. and enlarged by A. Scharff (Heidelberg: Quelle and Meyer Verlag, 1958),. Becker argued that Bismarck saw the monarchy as a counter-weight to liberalism and parliamentary government and therefore gave such a strong power position to the Hohenzollern monarchy in both the North German Confederation's constitution, and in the Reich's constitution.

62

Arthur Schopenhauer, "On Human Nature," in Essays, p. 42. Schopenhauer said: "In general, the monarchical form of government is that which is natural to man; just as it is natural to bees and ants, to a flight of cranes,...and many other animals, all of which place one of their numbers at the head of the business in hand. Every business in which men engage, if it is attended with danger...must also be subject to the authority of one commander;...philistines cannot...be allowed to guide and lead."

63

Betrachtungen, p. 260. The restrictions Mann placed on the suffrage indicate that his son Golo Mann was incorrect when he claimed that his father was merely aiming at the maintenance of the Wilhelmine state. See: Golo Mann, p. 370.

64

Max Weber, On Charisma and Institution Building, selected, ed. and introduced by S. N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) pp. 76-77. Weber pointed out the "impersonal" character of bureaucracies which arise from a need for rationally ordered national life, but also pointed out the fact that bureaucracies assume a life independent of those who attempt to control them.

65

William Bossenbrook, Geschichte des deutschen Geistes, trans. by Georg Hinch (Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn Verlag, 1963), p. 269.

66

Betrachtungen, p. 253.

67

To Mann the similarities between his Betrachtungen and the writings of National Socialism were a constant worry. In the 1920's he was accused by Artur Hubscher of abbreviating the Betrachtungen in order to eliminate some of the more Volkish aspects of the work. This accusation was incorrect. All editions of the Betrachtungen after 1922 were abridged, but only those passages which had attacked his brother Heinrich Mann were deleted. See: Ernst Keller, pp. 141-170.

CONCLUSION

In The Genesis of German Conservatism, the late Klaus Epstein divided conservative thinkers into three categories: those who cling to the status quo, those who from an understanding of history recognize that change is inevitable and attempt to save what they can of tradition, and those who wish to return to the peace and tranquility of a past age.¹ Each of these three categories have been applied by some commentators to Thomas Mann.

Golo Mann, characterizing his father's Betrachtungen, maintained that the work was an attempt to defend the German Obrigkeitsstaat. However the idea that the Betrachtungen is the work of a status quo conservative is poorly founded. The ideals presented in the Betrachtungen are not those of industrialized and powerful Wilhelmine Germany, but those of a romantic era which preceeded the Bismarckian era.

While Mann clearly recognized that change was inevitable, the robes of a reform conservative also fit him badly. Mann was not interested in molding the ideas of the nineteenth century into a form acceptable to the modern world, rather he attempted to define himself as a representative of the nineteenth century in the face of a twentieth century which seemed so radically different.

It is almost by a process of elimination that Mann fits into the category of those who wish to return to the peace and tranquility of a past age, and he therefore becomes a reactionary.

Mann's attachment to a portrait of Germany which he recognized as outdated makes him not simply a reactionary, but a utopian reactionary. His attachment to the romantic vision of Germany differs from that longing for the "good old times" which Dr. A. Thimme ascribed to the DNVP of the

Weimar republic.² Mann's feeling for the past was intellectual and spiritual, not a desire to see a defeated state system reimposed. He longed for the ideals of the past without really considering the concrete historical or political aspects of that past and their influence on the individual or society. Unlike the members of the DNVP who longed for the splendor, power, authority of the Obrigkeitsstaat, Mann longed for the harmony he felt the Romantic ideal offered.

The utopian reactionary aspect of Mann's Betrachtungen reveals itself in the work's anti-modernity. Similar to such German critics as Lagarde and Langbehn, Mann fought against the changes in Germany's culture and ideals being wrought by industrialization with weapons that may be termed moral or aesthetic ones. The rise of conditions which created and nurtured the mass man he regarded as immoral, partly because of his pessimistic attitude toward man, and also because he felt that atomized, industrialized, capitalist society could not fulfil the emotional and psychological needs of human nature. He assumed that the rise of politicalization had destroyed a harmony between rulers and ruled, the patriarchal relation between the master and a loving following. His anti-modernism was based on a vision of the past which was utopian; his use of this mythical past as the guidepost of his philosophizing makes him a reactionary.

His political notions share the same utopian reactionary character. Similar to the romantics, and even such romantic liberals as von Humboldt, Mann shared the tendency to intermingle the political and metaphysical. His notions of the eternal Volk which are the basis of his political thought clearly demonstrate this, as does his organismic

theory of the nation; the nation was for Mann not merely an artificial unit held together by ties of language and common living space, the nation was an entity decreed by nature itself.

Both the organismic notion of the nation and the Volkish political ideas Mann shared with such men as Lagarde and later Müller van der Bruck, but he did not share with them the messianic prophetic spirit with which their ideas were imbued. Nor did he share their anti-semitism or chauvinism which constituted the more negative aspects of their creeds.

The element which Mann's Betrachtungen clearly brings forth, and which is found throughout his Betrachtungen is the search for belonging. His nationalism, his anti-modernism, his political Volkish thought, are all aimed at presenting a portrait of man in an integrated setting. Mann viewed the individual man as part of a totality and it is not illogical to argue that Mann, had he been more to the point, would have said that man cannot be himself without belonging in every realm of his life to something or someone. Thus the Burger belongs to his city, the city to the nation, and the nation to nature itself.

It is the search for commitment and belonging, while at the same time striving for a fullness of individuality, which created Mann's dislike of democratic atomistic equality, his fear of industrial society, and his longing for a past which he felt had given to man the psychological, social and spiritual sense of belonging. This sense Mann felt was missing from the world of his time.

The thought of such men as Lagarde and Langbehn also strove for such a sense of belonging; they too felt lost and sought succor in

the womb of the Volk. Mann's thought, though superficially similar, is radically different, not only because the complexity of thought in the Betrachtungen far outshines that of men like Lagarde's; but also because Mann realized that the past in which man was integrated with his whole environment -- if it ever existed at all -- could hardly be recreated. This is evident from that pessimistic passage in the Betrachtungen where he said that just because progress is inevitable, it does not have to be urged on -- it will come anyway.

It is this pessimistic adoration of a non-existent past which is the most important factor in Mann's Betrachtungen. Mann mirrored the dream of the nineteenth century German for an integrated unified society, all the while realizing that the dream was just a dream; it is in this sense that Mann termed the Betrachtungen a "rearguard" action; the ideals for which he wrote and suffered were ideals that could not be. He recognized too clearly that the past, the Romantic past, the past of the Volk, of the Burger, was gone; to bring them to life was folly. This is clear from the Betrachtungen itself, and distinguishes Mann from those who sought to recreate the past, those who wished to make the past the future and brought about the catastrophe which befell Germany.

FOOTNOTES

1

Klaus Epstein, The Genesis of German Conservatism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 8-9.

2

Annelise Thimme, Flucht in den Mythos: Die Deutschnationale Volkspartei und die Niederlage von 1918. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), pp. 107-109.

3

Thomas Mann, Letters to Paul Amann 1915-1952, p. 103.

4

Thomas Mann, "Reaction und Fortschritt," Die Neue Rundschau, XXXX (1929), 211.

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